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THE MATCHLESS MYSTERY

AND OTHER SERMONS.

BY

CHARLES H. SPURGEON.

TENTH SERIES.

TOGETHER WITH

COMPLETE INDEXES

OF THE TEXTS AND SUBJECTS OF THE ENTIRE FOURTEEN VOLUMES OF THE AMERICAN EDITION OF HIS WORKS.

EDITED BY

JOHN STANFORD HOLME.

NEW YORK:
SHELDON & COMPANY,
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EDITORIAL NOTE.

If there is a minister of the gospel in the world who is truly cosmopolitan, that man is Charles H. Spurgeon. For those who enjoy his ministrations from week to week are not those alone who sit within the crowded walls of the New Metropolitan Tabernacle on the Surrey side of the Thames, but they are found in every quarter of the globe. Through the periodical press of this country he preaches the gospel to a larger audience than any man on this Continent. Mr. Spurgeon has now ministered for many years to the largest congregation in the world. To see him and to hear him has become a matter of curiosity to all who visit the great Metropolis. But it is not on these accounts chiefly that he is a man of general interest throughout Christendom. It is rather that over fifteen hundred of the sermons of this one man have been accurately reported and printed. It is that the number of readers of these sermons has continued steadily to increase for more than twenty years, until now they are read weekly by hundreds of thousands wherever the English tongue is spoken. It is above all that these sermons have been blessed to the conversion and edification of multitudes in all lands. These are facts which render the ministrations of Mr. Spurgeon of world-wide interest and place him in the front rank of the preachers of the gospel of all ages.

Many of the causes of the wonderful popularity of this

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distinguished preacher are not difficult to discover. In freshness and vigor of thought, in simplicity and purity of language, in grasp of gospel truth, and in tact and force in its presentation, he is perhaps without a peer in the pulpit.

When in early life Mr. Spurgeon commenced his ministrations in the New Park Street Church in London, he quickly filled the old house to overflowing. Soon he attracted the attention of all England. But he was regarded by many as a brilliant meteor that would soon fade away. Yet Mr. Spurgeon is to-day, a vastly more effective and even a more brilliant preacher than he was twenty years ago. He continues to grow in brilliancy as well as in efficiency year by year. No one can yet point to the slightest indication of exhaustion in either his faculties or his resources.

This doubtless is attributable in a measure to his industry, and well-directed application, as well as to natural ability and great personal piety. But Mr. Spurgeon's peculiar views of the word of God, and his manner of preparation for the pulpit also tend in no small degree to secure the *inexhaustible variety* which so strikingly characterizes his sermons. It is not his manner to spin his web out of himself. The resources from which he draws are not measured by the strength and the store of his own faculties, but rather by the infinite fullness of the divine word. He never preaches from a topic. He always has a text. His text is not a mere motto, but in it he finds his sermon. He uses his text with as much apparent reverence and appreciation as if those few words were the only words that God had ever spoken. The text is the gem which furnishes the life—the spirit and the substance of the discourse. Every sermon has the peculiar flavor and fragrance

and color of the divine seed-truth of which it is the growth. Thus as the Bible is a storehouse of seed-truths inexhaustible and of infinite variety, so Mr. Spurgeon's sermons are never alike. "Every seed yields its fruit after its kind." If he brings you up again and again to the same old truths it is always on a different side, or in a new light or with new surroundings.

A very strong confirmation of this view has been afforded us in the preparation of this edition of his works.

In making up the index of subjects, it was necessary to go carefully through the entire fourteen volumes page by page, and to note the different topics discussed, and then to arrange them in alphabetical order. When this work was done such was the wonderful variety of subject, of thought and of illustration, that in many thousand references, no two subjects or thoughts or illustrations were found exactly to correspond. The preacher is discussing essentially the same familiar truths over and over again. He is presenting the same great Saviour to lost sinners with what might seem slavish fidelity to the spirit and even to the letter of the written word. And yet his setting forth of truth, his shades of thought and his modes of illustration, always arrange themselves in new forms and colors with well nigh the endless variety of the combinations and tints of the clouds at setting sun.

It is not surprising therefore, that sermons so varied, fresh, and evangelical should have so large a circulation in this country—nor that the publishers should now be constrained to add still another volume to their already extended series. This will be the Tenth, and will increase the number of sermons contained in this edition of his works to more than two hundred and fifty. As some of these volumes have had an issue of one hundred thousand

copies, it will be seen that the circulation of these sermons even in this country is altogether without precedent, and as the verdict of the Christian public, it fully justifies the estimate we have placed upon them.

The discourses for the present series have been carefully selected out of more than three hundred published in England since the issue of the last volume of the American edition. In the selection the editor has been influenced chiefly by a desire to present those best calculated to do good in this country. And he has been perplexed only by the richness of the field from which he has been called to choose.

Every book that is worth publishing, ought to be indexed. To ordinary readers indexes are useful. To ministers, Sunday school teachers and students generally they are almost indispensable. It will be readily seen therefore, that the value of the works of Mr. Spurgeon will be greatly enhanced by a full index, by means of which their rich and varied contents are made easily accessible. These considerations have influenced the publishers to have compiled at great labor complete indexes of both texts and subjects of the entire fourteen volumes embraced in this edition of Mr. Spurgeon's works. Hereby it is hoped that their influence, through the divine blessing, may be greatly increased, and that they may go forth on a new mission for good throughout the land.

J. S. H.

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SERMON I.

THE MATCHLESS MYSTERY.

"For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones."—Ephesians v. 30.

I DO not hesitate to say that this is one of the most wonderful texts in the whole compass of revelation. It sets forth the mystery of mysteries, the very pith and marrow of the loftiest divinity. It is fitted rather to be the theme for a hundred elaborate discourses than for one brief homily. Most assuredly it is a deep that knows no sounding, an abyss where thought plunges into never-ending contemplations. He who handles it had need, first of all, to be filled with all the fulness of God. Hence we feel incapable of dealing with it as it should be dealt with; it is all too great and vast for us, we can no more hope to compass it than a child can hold an ocean in his hand. Beloved, it is a text that must not be looked upon with the eyes of cold, theological orthodoxy, which might make us content to say, "Yes, that is a great and important truth," and there leave it. It is a text to be treated as the manna was that fell from heaven; namely, to be tasted, to be eaten, to be digested, and to be lived upon from day to day. It is a text for the quietude of your meditation, when you can sit still and turn it over, and, like Mary, ponder it in your hearts. Long and loving should be your gaze upon the facets of this diamond of truth, this Koh-i-noor of revelation. It is a golden sentence fitted for

those choice hours when the King brings us into his banqueting house, and his banner over us is love ; when the distance between earth and heaven has become less and less, till it scarce exists—those halcyon times when all is rest round about us, because he who is our rest enables us to lean upon his bosom and to feel his heart of love beating true to us.

I ask you, O my brethren, therefore, as though you were quite alone in your own chamber, to pray for that frame of mind which is suitable to the subject, and to pray for me that I may be placed in that condition of heart which shall best enable me to speak upon it. We need our thoughts to be focused before they can reveal to us the great sight before us. Get to the place where Mary sat at Jesus' feet, and then will this text sound like music in your ears. Without any accompaniment of exposition from me, it will have all heaven's music in it ; "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Seven fold will be the happiness of the spirit which knows how to sit down and to taste of the marrow and the fatness, to drink of the "wine on the lees well refined," which are to be found in this inspired declaration.

Ere I preach upon it, there is one thing which it is necessary for us to do. They have a way in Scotland, before the communion, of "fencing the tables ;" that is to say, warning all those who have no right to come to the table to avoid the sin of unlawful intrusion, and so of eating and drinking condemnation unto themselves. They help the hearers to self-examination, lest they should come thoughtlessly and participate in that which does not belong to them. Now, my text is like a table of communion richly loaded, and far hence be ye to whom it does not belong, except ye learn the sacred way of coming in by the door into this sheepfold, where the pasture is so rich and green. If ye come by Christ the way, come and welcome ; if ye rest in him, if his dear wounds are the fountains of your life, and

his atoning sacrifice is your soul's only peace, come and welcome; for of you, and such as you, and all of us who are trusting in Jesus, it may be truly said, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." But if not believers in him, this heavenly verse has nothing to do with you. It is "the children's bread;" it belongs only to the children. It is Israel's manna; it falls for Israel. It is the stream which leaps from Israel's smitten rock, and flows neither for Edom, nor for Amalek, but for the chosen seed alone.

Look back, then, to the beginning of the epistle, and see of whom the apostle was speaking when he said "*we.*" This little word "*we*" is like the door of Noah's ark, it shuts out and shuts in. Does it shut us out or in?

Now, the apostle wrote his epistle to those of whom he said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Answer thou this question, thou who wouldst enjoy this text, Hast thou made thy calling and election sure? Has that matter ever been decided in thy spirit after honest search and inquiry into the grounds of thy confidence? Hast thou been led to choose thy God, for if so thy God had long ago chosen thee, and that matter is ascertained beyond all question, and out of it springs the undoubted assurance that you are one with him, since of all whom he has chosen it is true, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

The apostolic description is before you, I pray you read on: "Having predestinated us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Knowest thou anything about adoption? Hast thou been taken out of the family of Satan and enrolled in the family of God? Hast thou the Spirit of adoption in thee? Does thy soul cry "Abba, Father," at the very

thought of God? Art thou an imitator of God as a dear child? Dost thou feel that thy nature has been renewed, so that, whereas thou wast a child of wrath, even as others, thou hast now become a child of God? Judge, I pray thee, and discern concerning these things, for on thine answer to this question depends thy condition before God, thy union with Christ, or thy separateness from him.

Note, still, the apostle's words as you read on, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved." Dear hearer, dost thou know the meaning of those last words, "Accepted in the beloved"? Thou canst never be accepted in thyself; thou art sinful, and undone, and unworthy; but hast thou come and cast thyself upon the work, the blood and the righteousness of Jesus, and art thou therefore accepted, "Accepted in the beloved"? Hast thou ever enjoyed a sense of acceptance, so that thou couldst draw near to God, as no longer a servant beneath the curse, but a son beneath the blessing? If so, come and welcome to the text: it is all thine own.

But note the next verse:—"In whom we have redemption through his blood." O dear hearers do you know *the blood?* I do not care what else you know, if you do not know the blood; nor do I much mind what else you do *not* know. You may differ very widely in doctrine from some of the truths which I think I have learned from the word of God, but do you know the blood? Were you ever washed in it? Have you seen it sprinkled over-head and on the side-posts of the house wherein you dwell, so that the destroying angel passes you by? Is the blood of Christ the life-blood of your hope? God save me from preaching, and you from believing in a bloodless theology. It is a dead theology. Take Christ away, take the atonement by a substitutionary sacrifice away, and what is there left? But, oh, if we in very deed have redemption through his blood, then we are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

The apostle adds, "The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." And here, again, I press home the question upon the consciences of the members of this church, and upon the members of every professing church of Christ —Have you tasted forgiveness? Have you felt the burden of sin? Have you gone with that burden to the foot of the cross? Has the Heavenly Father ever said to you, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"? Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins, and that in reference to yourselves? Oh, do not be satisfied unless you do. Do not be put off with a bare hope that perhaps your sin is forgiven you, but struggle after that blessed full assurance which is able to say—

"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of my Saviour's precious blood,
With divine assurance knowing
He has made my peace with God!"

And if you do so know, possess, and enjoy the forgiveness of sins, then are you "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

Oh, how this last sentence concerning pardon and rich grace seems to cheer my soul! If none might come but those who never sinned, my guilty soul could never venture near the Lord. If none might come but those who have committed little sin, then must I be debarred. But it is "the forgiveness of sins" on a grand scale. Let me read the words: "The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." So it is great forgiveness, the forgiveness of great sin, because of great love. O beloved hearer, great sinner as you have been, yet if you are "accepted in the Beloved," and have "redemption through his blood," then all that is in the text belongs to you; so I will keep you waiting in the vestibule no longer, but set the door wide open, saying, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord. Wherefore standest thou without?" I pray the Holy Ghost to help you to come into this high festival, give you a sacred

appetite, and enable you now to appreciate the extraordinary sweetness of the words before us.

First, I shall try and expound—and it must be but feebly—*what the text means,* and secondly, *what the text secures.*

I. First, WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN? "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Read it in the light of the second chapter of the book of Genesis, for it is evident that there is a distinct allusion to the creation of Eve. The very words of Adam are quoted, and we are mentally conducted to that scene in the garden of Eden when the first man gazed upon the first woman, created to be his dear companion and helpmeet. What did Adam mean when he used these words? for the great husband of our souls must mean the same, only in a more spiritual and emphatic sense.

And, first, there was meant here *similarity of nature.* Adam looked at Eve, and he did not regard her as a stranger, as some creature of different genus and nature; "but he said, "She is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." He meant that she was of the same race, a participant in the same nature: he recognized her as a being of the same order as himself. Now, that is a low meaning of the text, but it is one meaning. Brethren, beloved, think of this truth for a moment. Jesus, the son of God, counted it not robbery to be equal with God. "Without him was not anything made that was made." He is "very God of very God." Yet he deigned for love of us to take upon himself our nature, and he did it completely, so that he assumed the whole of human nature, apart from its sin; and in that respect we may say of ourselves—that we are "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh." The very nature which we wear on earth Christ Jesus once carried about among us, and at last carried aloft to heaven. You believe in his Godhead, take heed never to commingle his Godhead and his humanity. Remember, Christ was not a deified man, neither was he a humanized God.

He was perfectly God, and at the same time perfectly man, made like unto his brethren in all things. Dwell for a moment upon this truth, for the text sets it forth. Born of a human mother, and swaddled like another child, he was from his birth as perfectly human even as you are. In nothing did he differ from you except in this, that he never wandered from God and broke his commands, and he was not defiled with that hereditary taint of original sin which dwelleth in you by nature. The like depressions to those which sadden your spirit he knew; the temptations of your nature assailed him; men and devils both sought to influence him. He was amenable to all the external physical arrangements of the globe. On him the shower pelted down, and wetted his garments; and on him the burning sun poured forth its undiminished heat. Upon his sacred person on the lone mountain-side, the dews descended until his head was wet with them, and his locks with the drops of the night. For him there were poverty, and hunger, and thirst, reproach, slander, and treachery. For him the sea tossed the barque as it will for you; and for him the land yielded thorn and thistle, as it does to you. He suffered, he ate, he toiled, he rested, he wept, and he rejoiced, even as you do, sin alone excepted. A real kinsman was he, not in fiction, but in substantial reality. Are you man? Jesus was a man. Do not doubt it. Do not look at your Lord as standing there on a pinnacle of superior nature, where you cannot come near him, but view him as your own flesh and blood, "a brother born for adversity." For so he is. He comes to you and says, "Handle me and see. A spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have." He invites your faith to look at the prints of the nails, and the scar of the spear-thrust. Did he not, after he had risen from the dead, prove his true humanity by eating a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb? And that same humanity has gone to heaven. The clouds received it out of our sight, but it is there.

"A man there was, a real man,
Who once on Calvary died;
And streams of blood and water ran
Down from his wounded side."

That same blest man exalted sits high on his Father's throne. Believe this and you will see how he is bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh.

And then recollect that, as his nature is as yours, so in another sense, he has made your nature as his; for you are born again, and gifted with a higher life. You were carnal; he has now made you spiritual. You could not drink of his cup, or be baptized with his baptism, till his Spirit had come upon you. But now ye are made "partakers of the divine nature,"—strong words, but scriptural: "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." "For as ye have borne the image of the earthy Adam, ye shall also bear the heavenly." Now you, as spiritual men, cry out to God in prayer, and so did he when he was here. Now you are in an agony as you strive with God, and so was he, but the bloody sweat is a part of his substitutionary work, in which he trod the wine-press alone. His meat and drink was to do the will of him that sent him, and it is yours, I trust; at any rate, it should be if you are your Lord's. He lived for God; he lived and died for love of men; and that same love of God and man, though in a feebler measure, burns within your heart. You are, therefore, now made by his grace to participate in his moral and spiritual nature, and you will never be satisfied till you awake in his likeness. But you will awake in his likeness, so that when he sees you and you see him, then shall be abundantly manifested to you that you are a member "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones:"—

"Such was thy grace, that for our sake
Thou didst from heaven come down,
Thou didst of flesh and blood partake,
In all our sorrows ONE.

"Ascended now, in glory bright,
Still ONE with us thou art;
Nor life, nor death, nor depth, nor height,
Thy saints and thee can part.

"Oh, teach us, Lord, to know and own
This wondrous mystery,
That thou with us art truly ONE.
And we are ONE with thee!

"Soon, soon shall come that glorious day,
When seated on thy throne,
Thou shalt to wondering worlds display,
That thou with us art ONE!"

Similarity of nature, then, is the first meaning of the text.

Regard, I pray you, brethren, with much solemn attention, a higher step of the ladder. It signifies *intimate relationship*, for I hardly think that Adam would have said quite so strongly, "She is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," if he had thought that the woman would disappear, or would become the wife of another. It was because she was to be his helpmeet, and they were to be joined together in bonds of the most intimate communion, that therefore he said, "Not only is she of the same bone and flesh as I am, but she is bone of *my* bones, and flesh of *my* flesh. She is related to me." What a near and loving relationship marriage has bestowed upon us! It is a blessing for which good men dwelling with affectionate wives praise God every day they live. Marriage and the Sabbath are the two choice boons of primeval love that have come down to us from Paradise, the one to bless our outer and the other our inner life. Oh, the joy, the true, pure, elevated peace and joy which many of us have received through that divinely ordained relationship! We cannot but bless God every time we repeat the dear names of those who are now parts of ourselves. Marriage creates a relationship which ends only when death doth us part. It may be dissolved. Alas, sin

enters even here! A dark crime may be committed, but, with the exception of that, it is for life—for better, for worse; only the mortal stroke can part. Now think of it. As is your relation, O woman, to your husband, and as is your relation, O man, to your wife, such is the relation which exists between you, as a believer in Jesus, and Christ Jesus your Lord. It is the nearest, dearest, closest, most intense, and most enduring relationship that can be imagined. I love and bless God for ever declaring that his relationship to us may be likened to that of a father or a mother to a child. Did you ever hear those words without tears—(I think I never did)—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will not I forget thee." And yet there is a closer intimacy, somehow in the relationship which is declared in the text, because there is a kind of equality between the married ones, tempered by that headship of which the apostle speaks, and which we delight to recognize in our beloved Lord toward ourselves. The child cannot, while it is yet a babe, at any rate, enter into its mother's feelings, it is far below the mother; but the wife communes with her husband; she is lifted up to his level; she is made a partaker of his cares and sorrows, of his joys and his successes, and the intimacy arising out of their conjugal union is of the closest kind. Now—again I say it, and I cannot open it up further than to say it—such is the relationship between the believer's soul and the Lord Jesus. Well did the spouse break out with the rapturous language, which forms the first words of the song—"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine," as if she did not need to describe her relationship, but longed to enjoy the sweets of it. My brother, I pray you may so enjoy it; that now if you be poor in this world, if you be an orphan, if you be almost a lone one in this great city, you may feel, "No longer am I an orphan, no longer am I alone. My Maker is my

husband. The Lord of Hosts is his name, and my redeemer the mighty One of Israel; and from this day forth will I rejoice that I am bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh." Similarity of nature, and closeness of relationship, are evidently in the text.

But I clearly see another and deeper meaning. It meant from Adam's lips, *mysterious extraction.* I will not make bold to say that he knew what had occurred to him in his sleep. He might not have known all, but he seems to have had a mystic enlightenment which made him guess what had occurred—at least the words seem to me to have that ring in them. "She is bone of my bones"—for a bone had been taken from him, "and flesh of my flesh," for out of him had she been taken. He seems to have known that somehow or other she sprang of him. Whether he knew it or not, Christ knows right well the origin of his spouse. He knew where his church came from. There is the mark in his side still: there is the memorial in the palms of his hands and on his feet. Whence came this new Eve, this new mother of all living? Whence came this spouse of the second Adam? She came of the second Adam. She was taken from his side, full near his heart. Have you never read, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit"? Had Jesus never died, he would have been made to abide alone as to any who could be help-meets for him, and could enter into fellowship with him; but, inasmuch as he has died, he has brought forth much fruit, and his church has sprung from him, and in that sense she is bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh. What mean I by the church? says one. I mean by the church all the people of God, all the redeemed, all believers, as I explained at the commencement. Think you I mean by the church the harlot of the seven hills? God forbid that Christ should have fellowship with her! How can he so much as look upon her except with

horror? Means he by the church the politically supported corporation that men call a church now-a-days? Nay, but the spiritual, the quickened, the living, the believing, the holy people, wherefore they may be, or whatever name they may be called. These are they that sprang out of Christ, even as Levi from the loins of Abraham. They live because they receive life from him, and at this day they are dead in themselves, and their life is hid with Christ in God. So the text leads us to a deep meditation as to mysterious extraction.

But I find the time goes too swiftly for me, and I must observe next that I am sure that in the text there is more than this. There is, in the fourth place, *loving possession*. He said, "She is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh;" he felt she was his own, and belonged solely to him. Of anything there might be in the garden, Adam was but owner in the second degree; but when he saw her, he felt she was all his own. By bonds and ties which did not admit of dispute, his bone and his flesh was she. Now, beloved, at this moment let this thought dance through your soul; you belong to Jesus, altogether you belong to Jesus. Let not your love go forth to earthly things, so soiled and dim; but send it all away, up to him to whom you belong; aye, send it all to him. "Set not your affection upon things on the earth," but set it all upon things above, for you belong wholly to your Lord. All that there is of your spirit, soul, and body, the triple kingdom of your nature, Christ has purchased by his blood. It were a dark thought to cross a man's mind, that his spouse belonged in part to some other. It could not be. And will you provoke your Lord to jealousy? Will you suffer it to seem so by your actions or your words? Nay, rather say to-night anew,

> "'Tis done, the great transaction's done;
> I am my Lord's, and he is mine.
> He drew me, and I followed on,
> Charmed to confess the voice divine.

"High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

"For ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." We belong entirely unto him.

And to close this exposition—this skimming of the surface, rather—there is one more matter, and this is the very essence of the meaning. A *vital union* exists between us and Christ. When the apostle was showing that we were one with Christ, as the wife is with the husband, he felt that the metaphor, though it set forth much, did not set forth all. He would have us know that we are more easily knit to Jesus than is a woman to her husband: for they are, after all, separate individualities, and they may act, and too often do so, far too distinctly for themselves. But here he puts it, "We are members of his body." Now, here is a vital union, the closest imaginable. It is not unity; it is identity. It is more than being joined to; it is being made a part of, and an essential part of the whole. Do you think I strain the text, and go beyond the fact? Listen to this word. The apostle, in speaking of the church, said, concerning Christ, that the church was his body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." And note the majesty of that speech—that the church should be the fulness of Christ. Now, Christ, without his fulness, is evidently not full; he must have his people; they are essential to him. The idea of a Saviour is lost, apart from the saved. He is a head without a body if there be no members. What without his people is Jesus but a king without subjects, and a shepherd without a flock? It is essential to any true thought of Christ, that you think of his people. They must come in. They are one with him in every true view of Jesus Christ our Lord.

How we are one with him! Ah, brethren, much might

be said, but I fear little would be explained by words. I want you to feel it, and to be comforted by the fact of the vital union of Jesus and his saints. Have you never heard him say to you—

> "I feel at my heart all thy sighs and thy groans,
> For thou art most near me, my flesh and my bones.
> In all thy distresses thy head feels the pain,
> They all are most needful, not one is in vain?"

Oh, do get to know this, you tried and tempted ones, you poor poverty-stricken people of God, you who could not help coming here to-night, wet as it was, because you must have spiritual meat, you were so hungry after your Lord. Oh, do get this morsel now, and feed on it. You are one with him. You were "buried in him in baptism unto death," wherein also you have risen with him. You were crucified with him upon the cross; you have gone up into heaven with him, for he has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And surely you shall be actually in your very person with him where he is, that you may behold his glory. You are one with him.

Now, tie up these five truths like five choice flowers in a nosegay. Blend them like sweet spices, and let them be a bundle of camphire and a cluster of myrrh, to lie all night upon your bosom, to give you rest and to sweeten your repose. There is between you and your Lord a similarity of nature, and an intimate relationship; you have a mysterious extraction from him, and he has a loving possession of you, and a vital union with you.

Come, now, we must only have a few minutes to catch some of the juice that will flow out of these clusters of Eshcol while we tread them for a moment, just to show what the wines of the kingdom are like. WHAT DOES THE TEXT SECURE?

First, it seems to me, that the text secures the eternal

safety of every one who is one with Christ. You know the figure we often use, that when a man's head is above water you cannot drown his feet; and as long as my Head is in glory, though I be but the sole of his foot, and only worthy to be trodden in the mire, how can ye drown me? Is it not written, "Because I live ye shall live also"—all of you who are one with him? The idea of Christ losing members of his body is to me grotesque, and at the same time ghastly. Does he change his members like some aquatic creatures which shoot their limbs and get fresh joints? I trow it is not so with Christ, the second Adam. Will he lose his members? Can he lose *one* member? Then can he lose *all?*

> "If ever it should come to pass
> That sheep of Christ could fall away,
> My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
> Would fall a thousand times a day."

But herein lies our safety; "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." I know that some have perverted this blessed truth into the wicked lie that the Christian man may live as he likes, and yet be safe. No such doctrine is to be found between the covers of that book; the doctrine of the safety of the saints is far other than that. It is that the renewed man shall live as God likes, shall persevere in holiness and hold on his way, until he arrives at the blessed perfection of his Lord, changing from glory to glory into that image which he shall reach and possess forever. I see—I pity those who do not see it, but I will not blame—I see, I think, strong reason for believing in the security of every soul which is one with Christ.

But, next, I see here a very sweet thought. If I am one with Christ, then I certainly enjoy, above all things, his love. Last Saturday week in the evening I was trying to turn over this text to preach to you from it in the morning; but I

was wrung with bitter pains which made me feel that I should not preach, and kept me wearily waiting through the night watches. But do you know what comforted me very much about the text? It was that sentence which is a near neighbor of it; "No man ever yet hated his own flesh." I seized upon that, and my sad heart cried out, "Surely the Man Christ Jesus never yet hated his own flesh." If we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, he may chasten, he may correct, and lay on heavy strokes, and give sharp twinges, and make us cry out; he may even thrust us in the fire, and heat the furnace seven times hotter; but he never can neglect and abhor his own flesh. Still is there love in his heart. I hate no part of my body, not even when it aches. I hate it not, but love it still; it is a part of myself; and so doth Jesus love his people. And you, poor sinners, who feel that you are not worthy to be called his people, nevertheless his love goes out to you, despite your imperfections. Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them to the end, and he has left it upon record, "As my father hath loved me, even so have I loved you. Continue ye in my love."

Another most enchanting thought also arises from our subject. The apostle goes on to say, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Oh, those two words, "nourisheth it." Are you living in a district where you do not get the gospel? Well, then, go to the gospel's Lord and say to him, "Lord, hate not thine own flesh, but nourish me." Have you been for a while without visits from Christ? have you lost the light of his countenance? Do not be satisfied with nourishing; go further and plead for cherishing. Ask for those love tokens, for those gentle words, for those secret blandishments, known to saints, and to none but saints, for, "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." Go and ask for both these

forms of love, and you shall be nourished and cherished. The good husband does not merely bring so much bread and meat into the house and fling it down, saying, "There, that will nourish you." Oh, not so, but there are tender words and kindly acts, by which he cherishes as well as nourishes. And your Lord will not only give you bread to eat which the world knows not of, but he will give it you according to his loving kindness and the multitude of his tender mercies: for he maketh us to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth us beside the still waters, gently guiding as a shepherd conducts his flock. Rejoice, then, that your nourishing and your cherishing are secure.

I will not keep you longer when I have said thus much. If we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, then he will one day present us to himself, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," for the whole body must be so presented. Alas, our spots are many, and sadly mar our beauty! Brethren, I love not to think little of my spots. I wish I had not even a speck. Alas, our wrinkles! Let us not talk lightly of them. It is most sad that on the Beloved's darling there should be a solitary blot. It is the worst wrinkle of all when a man does not see his own wrinkles, and when he does not mourn over them. But spots and wrinkles there are. I hope we do not say, "Yes, they are there," and then add, "And they must be there." No, beloved, they ought not to be there: there ought to be no sin in us. If there be a sin which ought to be upon us, why it is clear it is no sin. A thing that ought to be is not a sin. If we served our Master as he deserves to be served, we should never sin, but our lives would be perfect; and therefore it is our daily burden that the spots and wrinkles still will show; and this is our consolation, that he will one day present us to himself, holy and without blemish, "not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

"Oh, glorious hour, oh, blest abode;
I shall be near and like my God,
Nor spot nor wrinkle shall remain,
His perfect image to profane."

It will be a blessed thing indeed to have attained to this, to wear the image of the heavenly, and be perfect even as our Bridegroom is perfect.

Then, remember, all the glory Christ has we shall share in. You cannot honor a warrior who returns from the wars, and say to him, "Great general, we honor your head." Oh, no, he who fought his country's battles, and won the victory, when he was honored was altogether honored as a man. And when the Master at the last shall have finished all his work, and, the whole battle that he undertook being finished, and the victory gained, he enters perfectly into his joy, we shall enter into the joy of our Lord. Does he sit upon a throne? He has said we shall sit upon his throne. Has he triumphed? We shall bear the palm branch, too. Whatever he has we shall share. Are we not heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ? My soul feels ready to leap right away from this body at the thought of the glory that shall be revealed in us—not in Paul and Peter only, but *in us*. Poor things, poor things, that struggle hard each day with infirmities and trials, ye shall be with him where he is, and shall behold his glory forever. "So shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

"Since Christ and we are one,
Why should we doubt or fear?
If he in heaven hath fixed his throne,
He'll fix his members there."

In this spirit come ye to the communion table, and find your Master there. But oh, if you are not resting in him, if the blood was never upon you, you are condemned already, because you have not believed on the Son of God; and I pray

that your bed may be cold and hard as a stone to you to-night, and your eyes may forget to sleep, and your heart may know no rest until you have said, "I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned." Then take with you Jesus as a mediator, and draw nigh to the throne of grace. Go, plead his blood and merits, and you shall live ; and then you, too, shall be able to join with the saints who say, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Amen. Amen.

SERMON II.

MARROW AND FATNESS.

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant. For thy word's sake, and according to thy own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God; for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears."—2 Samuel vii. 18-22.

DAVID was overwhelmed with the mercy of God: Nathan's message was too much for him. He felt emotions in his bosom which he could not express. Like a wise man, he went at once, while under the impulse of gratitude, into the place of nearness to God. It was not every one who might go in and sit before the Lord as he did; but he felt he had a special call to draw near unto the Most High: and there he sat him down in the posture of waiting to receive the fulfilment of what was promised, in the posture of rest, as one who had now all that he could desire, and was pressed down under the weight of blessing. Yet the psalmist's sitting was also a

posture of worship, and surely of all passages of Scripture, none can be said to contain more true adoration than that which is now before us. The king sat, however, *before the Lord.* The mercy had all come from God, and therefore to God all his praise be offered. His soul waited only upon the Lord, because his expectation was alone from him. He was conscious of being in the sacred presence, and he sat there, feeling that by the covenant blessing he had been brought very near, and his spirit exulted in that nearness. Brethren and sisters in Christ, the mercies which God has shown to us are as great as those which he manifested to his servant David, and if the Spirit of God has opened our eyes to see and understand them we may this morning ardently wish to do precisely what David did. Let us have boldness to enter into the nearest possible fellowship with God—yea, let us go where David could not go, within the veil, and there, where Christ has opened up the way through his rent body, let us sit down in a restful, waiting, happy spirit, and give full play to all those divine emotions which ought to be aroused by reflecting upon the loving kindness of the Lord. I have selected this subject because there are many among us who have lately found the Saviour, and it is well to let them see the happiness which belongs to them, the pleasures and the treasures which are theirs in Christ Jesus, that they may render unto the God of grace the glory which is due unto his name.

David did not understand the words of Nathan to relate merely to his dynasty and to his dominion over the house of Israel. He looked far beyond temporal things, and therefore in the words before us there is a spiritual depth which will not strike the eye of the casual reader. The New Testament must be the expositor of the Old, and Peter in his famous sermon gives us the key to this passage. Turn to Acts ii. 29, and you will find that Peter accounts for a memorable utterance of David in the Psalms by declaring

that he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.

The joy which filled David's bosom was a spiritual one, because he knew that Jesus would come of his race, and that an everlasting kingdom would be set up in his person, and in him should the Gentiles trust. Now, then, we also, being blest with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, are bound to feel as David felt, and therefore, we shall pass in review David's expression, with the desire that we may drop into the same mood. May God the Holy Ghost, who alone can enable us to do so, bless our meditation at this time.

I. First I shall want you to notice THE HUMILITY apparent in David's words. "Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, *Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?*"

First, he owned *the lowliness of his origin*—"What is my house?" He came not of royal blood. Nathan spake the truth when he said in the Lord's name, "I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep." He was but a humble shepherd lad when first he was anointed, and after that anointing he continued in that humble office. From this he rose to become the leader of a motley band of free-lances exiled from their country; yet the Lord was pleased to call him from his low estate to make him king over the chosen people. Beloved, what is our origin? What is there about our descent that could claim for us the high privilege of being the sons of God? Trace our origin to its most ancient source, and behold sin is there, staining the escutcheon of our house. All down the line there is a taint of high treason against the divine majesty; we come of a race of rebels, and our own personal birth was marred with sin. Heraldry lends no pomp to us, and the genealogist for the most of us reveals no hereditary glories, and if he

did they would be mere fancies and fictions not worthy to be mentioned before the presence of the Lord. "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my father's house?"

David laid the most stress upon *his own personal unworthiness.* He said, "Who am I? What was there in me that thou shouldst make me a king, and a progenitor of the Christ?" And will not each believer here say the same? Who am I? What is there in me? God might have chosen the great and mighty of the world, but he has passed them by; he might have chosen the learned and famous, but not many of them are called; he hath chosen the poor of this world and things that are despised; yea, the base things hath God chosen, and the things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are, that no flesh might glory in his presence. Look at yourself from head to foot; examine every cranny of your heart, and every single feature of your character, and can you see anything there that might command Jehovah's esteem, any qualifications for being bought with redeeming blood, any reasons why you should be made sons of God, and heirs of glory? The Lord had reasons for choosing you, for he acts according to the counsel of his will, but those reasons are not in you; they lie in his own bosom, and you must exclaim, "Who am I that thou hast brought me hitherto?" I have no doubt that David looked upon his own deservings—what if I rather correct myself and say his own undeservings?—and marvelled that the Lord had chosen him and rejected Saul. He was a man after God's own heart, but his conduct was that of a bold, rough soldier, and he could not look upon it without observing its imperfections. He prayed in the twenty-fifth Psalm, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord." These sins are not recorded in the chronicles of his life, but they were written in his own penitent memory; and being humbled concerning them he cried, "Who am

I?" There must have been many an action in his exile and wanderings which he did not rejoice to remember; for instance his mimicry of madness before the king of Gath, his great anger against Nabal, and his affinity with the Philistines; and besides such prominent errors as these, he could see many failings and transgressions all along, and these both made the grace of God the more illustrious, and led him to cry from his very heart, "Who am I, O Lord God?"

Now, brethren and sisters, look back upon your own lives before conversion. What were they? Let them be blotted out with tears. Consider your lives since conversion, and confess that whenever you have been left to yourselves, and the grace of God has withdrawn for a while, you have always stumbled into some form or other of deplorable folly. Who am I? What have I done? What have I been? How is it that I am made thy child, purchased with the blood of Jesus, and made an heir of heaven? We may sum it all up in that exclamation, "Why me, Lord?"

"Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter where there's room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"

There is something very interesting in the expression, "Who am I, O Lord God?" His sense of *his own nothingness* is strikingly set forth by putting the "I" side by side with "Lord God." "I David, Jesse's son, the shepherd's boy, who am I, O thou infinite, all-commanding Jehovah, Creator, Preserver, Lord over all? How can I stand in thy presence? I shrink to nothing there. Did I not come of thee? Do I not owe all to thee? Art thou not the very breath of my nostrils? and I am a nothing, a very dream, a thing of nought, and yet thou dost look upon me; and thou showerest down thy mercies upon me; with a flood of blessedness dost thou carry me away. Who am I, O Lord

God, and what is my house ?" Thus you see David's humility under a sense of mercy.

And let us here remark that nothing humbles a man like the mercy of God. Unkind, ungenerous remarks do not humble the soul, they rather gender pride. Under the criticisms of unkindness a man who is a man finds all that is strong within him coming to the front, and, as in Job's case, self-assertion straightway leads the van. Reproach and rebuke tend rather to make men proud than humble, love is the melting power. Nothing weighs a man down like a load of blessing. When you see God blotting out your sin, accounting you righteous in his sight, for Jesus' sake, and saying to you, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee," where is boasting then ? It is excluded. Love shows boasting to the door, and bars its return. Peter was ready enough to speak of what he had done, but in the presence of his loving Lord, when he saw his ship sinking through the plenteous draught of fishes, he knelt down and cried in deep humiliation, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

> "The more thy glories strike mine eyes
> The humbler I shall lie."

A sight of the glory and mercy of God is sure to produce in us a sense of shame for our ill-desert, combined with wonder that God should have so much as a single kind look for us. Sit ye down, then, children of God, and review his mercy and be humbled. Do not deny yourselves the joyful review because of a jealous fear of being exalted by it. Never endorse the great lie of the self-righteous, that full assurance of faith leads men to presumption. It does no such thing ; it humbles a man, makes him feel his own unworthiness, and so leads him to walk more carefully and prayerfully before his God. It is in this point that faith makes us strong, for while it exalts our joys, it slays

our pride and makes us shrink to nothing before the great ALL IN ALL.

II. Now observe secondly, David's WONDERING GRATITUDE. He wondered first, *at what God had done for him;* "What is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?—to a house of cedar, and to be able to talk about building a house for thee; to be thy chosen king, and to have my seed established on my throne, and to become the ancestor of the Christ!" Come, brethren and sisters, do you not need me to preach to you here. I should like to sit down and leave you to muse upon what the Lord has done in bringing you hitherto—up from the pit of destruction, up from the miry clay of your depravity, out of the horrible prison-house of your dread of divine wrath, away from the Egypt of darkness and bondage into light and liberty. What an almighty work it was that brought you from darkness into light, from death into life. Bless the Lord for this. Praise him for your calling when effectually he drew you, and you ran unto him weeping and singing. Praise him for your pardon when he washed you in the blood and you were clean, and knew you were. Wonder of wonders this! Praise him for your justification, when he took the robe the Saviour wrought and decked you with it, as never was bride arrayed by the most loving bridegroom. Praise him for your regeneration, when you were born into a new world: praise him for being set apart for holy uses, admitted to new company, filled with holy joys, instructed in heavenly truths, and dedicated to sacred duties. Praise him for sanctification, which has made you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Praise him for the preservation from sin which you have hitherto received, and the education for eternity which has so happily commenced; for the provision so bounteous with which he has furnished a table in the wilderness, both temporally and spiritually, and for the protection with which he has warded off the arrow that flieth

by day, and the pestilence that walketh in darkness. O Lord, I bless thee that thou hast brought me hitherto. Sometimes when I take a view of what God has done for me I feel like Christian when he went through the Valley of the Shadow of Death by night. Remember how Bunyan pictures the scene;—a narrow pathway with a pit on this side and a deep morass on that; on all sides hobgoblins, dragons, and spirits of the deep, seeking to destroy him; his sword useless, and therefore put by in its sheath; no weapon in his hand but that All-prayer, which he found alone to be equal to the emergency; and when he had gone through it and the sun rose on him, and he looked back, he could not believe his eyes that he passed through it. And truly at this moment looking back on life with its innumerable temptations, and remembering the tendency to yield there is in every one of us, we can each one sing as Christian did—

"Oh, world of wonders (I can say no less),
That I should be preserved in that distress
That I have met with here! Oh, blessed be
That hand which from it hath delivered me!
Dangers in darkness, devils, hell, and sin,
Did compass me, while I this vale was in;
Yea, snares, and pits, and traps, and nets did lie
My path about, that worthless, silly I
Might have been catched, entangled, and cast down,
But since I live, let Jesus wear the crown."

David did not end his wonder there, but went on to another and greater theme, viz., *the blessings which the Lord had promised him.* He praised the Lord for what he had laid up as well as for what he had laid out. He said, and mark the words, "And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God, but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come." What a wonderful expression! "And this was yet a small thing in thy sight." It sometimes appears as if every mercy the Lord brings us is

meant to eclipse those that have gone before. For instance, he gives a sinner pardon, and the soul is for a time perfectly content with cleansing, and expects nothing more, but soon it learns that there is such a thing as justification; and when it comes to be just with God, complete in Christ, and accepted in the Beloved, then it rejoices anew as if pardon were but a small thing compared with justification. And lo, ere our eyes have fully drunk in the beauty of justification, we hear the word which saith, "A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you: I will write my law in your hearts, and ye shall not depart from me," and our hearts are carried away with the splendors of sanctification. Scarcely, however, have we been fully made aware of the extent of this blessing before another portion of the royal regalia is uncovered, and we hear it said, "They shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty," and now we understand that we are adopted, and are children of God. Before we fully understand this great privilege we begin to hear the song whose swell is like that of many waters, "He hath made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever," and we see the royal prerogative, the priestly dignity which God has put upon us; yea, and long before even these mercies are perfectly understood we are called away to see the heavenly joys, compared with which all else will seem to be yet a small thing.

I beg you, my brethren, to remember to-day that your God has spoken of you for a great while to come. He has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Is not that for a great while to come? He has bidden thee say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Is not that for a great while to come? He has promised to give you all you ever shall require. "No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly." Note well that

text ever to be remembered, "Because I live ye shall live also," and that petition of our Lord, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." These and a hundred more gracious words, all concern a great while to come. Oh, my brethren, you have not obtained transient blessings, boons which will be gone to-morrow, gifts which will decay as the year grows old and the autumn leaves flutter to the ground. You have not obtained a mercy which will leave you when you tremble in decrepitude, nay rather, when old and grey-headed your God will not forsake you; you shall still bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright. "When thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee; the floods shall not overflow thee;" therefore may you boldly say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." When ye die ye shall rise again. In your flesh you shall see God, and shall rejoice before him. Yea, for ever shall you be satisfied when you wake up in his likeness; you shall go into everlasting joy, and so shall be for ever with the Lord. He has spoken to you for a great while to come. Sit down and wonder; wonder and adore for evermore.

"Firm as the lasting hills,
This covenant shall endure,
Whose potent *shalls* and *wills*
Make every blessing sure:
When ruin shakes all nature's frame,
Its jots and tittles stand the same."

David had yet another theme for wonder, which was this—*the manner of the giving of all this.* There is often as much in the manner of gift as in a gift itself. I have known some one who could refuse a favor, and give greater pleasure by their kindly-worded denial than others by their rude consent. Now, here is a mercy of which the way of giving it is, if possible, more astounding than the mercy

itself, though that is amazing beyond measure; for David says, "And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" The word in the Hebrew is the "law." It is never translated, except in this case, by the word "manner;" and we may keep to the word "law" if we like:—"Is this the law of man, O Lord God?" We will render the passage first according to the authorized version; "Is this the manner of man?" Does man act like this? Does man pitch his love upon the unworthy? Does man exalt the lowest to the highest place? Does man forgive transgressions, and continue to do so? Does man bear provocation, and return love for offences? Is man so faithful? Is man so bounteous? Oh, man can never be divine, and therefore man can never come up to the infinity of thy grace, O Lord God. This is not after the manner of man, neither is it after the law of man, for the law of Adam is, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Punishment follows quick on the heels of sin. Free grace is not the law of the first man, it is the law of another man, the Second Adam, and so some render the passage, "This is the law of the Man," the Man Christ Jesus, the true Adam. We will not contend for that rendering, but it contains a truth which we will now utter in our own words. It is not the law of man, it is the law of grace, the law of infinite mercy, the law of infallible faithfulness, the law of immutable love. Beloved, if it had not been revealed to you ye could never have imagined or dreamed of such a fulness of grace as the Lord has actually made to pass before you. It is more marvelous than romance. It may well make your heart exult, for it is astonishing beyond all measure. Jonathan Edwards, when defending the great Calvinistic theory, made use of language somewhat to this effect: "You tell me that the doctrines of grace are a dream; then, if it be so, you ought to join with me in perpetual regret that it is so." I venture to say, let the earth be hung in sackcloth if there be no covenant of grace, no way

of salvation by redemption ; for it is the most charming of conceptions, and brings to mankind the most extraordinary of blessings. If this be dreaming, let me dream on, my God, for ever. Eternal love welling up in infinite blessing to the chosen race, and pouring forth for ever inexhaustible rivers of mercy, is far above all that man could of himself have imagined. Poetry has never soared within a myriad leagues of such an imagination. I am more than content with the covenant love of my God. I ask for nothing else. This fills my soul and satisfies my spirit, and I would sit down before thee, my Father, and say, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God ?" Infinite love granting infinite boons ! The gospel must be true ; it bears its own witness upon its very brow, for who could have made it up ? Where is the imagination that could have conceived such majestic mercy as God reveals unto his people ?

III. Now, changing the note, and yet continuing in the same strain, we have to speak of David's emotion of LOVE. I almost regret that I have to speak to you ; I wish I could sit still and yet make you feel what I feel. If there could be some electric action by which thought could be communicated without words, it would suit my mood exactly at this moment. David found but a scant outlet for his love. What precious words are these : "*What can David say more?*" It is love struck dumb by receiving an unspeakable gift. The king was exactly in the same case as Paul when he said, "What shall we then say to these things ?" To that question no answer was ever given by love. Love sat silent after she had asked it, speechless in adoration ; and faith pushed himself forward and cried, "If God be for us, who can be against us ?" But love was silent, dumbfounded with the mass of mercy. So David says, "What can David say more ?" Certainly no eloquence can match the silence of human love abashed by divine love. Sit ye down, O ye saints, and cry, "What can thy servants say ?"

Notice the childlikeness of this love. "What can *David* say more?" Your little child, if she is ill, will not say, "Mother, nurse me," but "Mother, nurse poor little Mary:" and when she feels very sick she will say, "Mary's head aches." Your little John, when he wants you to play with him, will say, "Please, Father, take little John on your knee," or "Please, Father, take John for a walk." It is the way children talk, and this is David's child-talk to God. "What shall David say more?" He might have said, "What shall I say more?" but love taught him a simple and sweet speech which he delighted to use.

Observe, it is a love which longs for communion, and enjoys it. He says "What can David say more *unto thee?*" He can talk to other people, but he does not quite know how to speak to God, and then he adds, "For thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant," which is a parallel passage to that of Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," as if he could not speak his heart, but his Master could read it, and he besought the Lord to act as his interpreter. Such thoughts as those which were in David's mind break the backs of words and stagger speech. Tongues are an after-thought, hearts come first; and oftentimes hearts wish they could fly away from tongues. Language is but a feeble wing, we want to ride the lightning.

"Teach me some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above,"

has often been our cry. We are right enough in thinking that we can never express ourselves until we get to heaven. How does John Berridge put it in that singular hymn? I do not know if I can recall it on the spur of the moment. Yes, here it is—

"Then my tongue would fain express
All his love and loveliness;
But I lisp and falter forth
Broken words not half his worth.

"Vex'd I try and try again,
Still my efforts all are vain;
Living tongues are dumb at best,
We must die to speak of Christ."

Death must unloose these stammering tongues, or they will never be able to speak all that we feel when divine love casts us into devout raptures. Strip us of this cumber, and we will vie with seraphs in their burning hymns, and even the heavenly harps shall learn from us how to magnify the Lord. Till then we must be content to cry with David, What can we say more. Thou, Lord, knowest thy servants.

But do you see it is obedient love as well? It is not mere sentiment, there is a practicalness about it, for he says, "Lord, thou knowest *thy servant*," he subscribes himself as henceforth bound to God's service. With delight he puts on his Master's livery, and sits like a servitor in the hall of the King of kings, waiting to hear what shall be spoken to him. As the eyes of the handmaidens are to their mistress, so his eye is up to his God. Hence it is that David was wont in after times to sing, "O Lord, I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." He had caught the spirit of the Christian proverb, "To serve God is to reign." He loved to do homage at the feet of his liege-lord, and yield himself and all that he had as a reasonable service to him who had crowned him with loving kindness and tender mercies. Warm love always urges the soul to service. None are so ready to wear the yoke of Christ as those who have leaned on his bosom. The nearer we come to our Father's heart the more submissive we are to his commands. Free grace is the best atmosphere in which to grow strong in obedience. The more often we consider what we owe to eternal love the more ready we shall be to pay our vows unto the Lord.

How he dwells upon those words, "Thou, Lord God." What pleasure he finds in the very name of his Benefactor

and Master. All through Scripture we ought to notice the titles by which God is called in each distinct place. We are so poverty-stricken in thought that we generally use but one name for God; not so the rich soul of David; throughout the Psalms you will find him appropriately ringing the changes upon Adonai, El, Clohim, Jehovah, and all the varied combinations of names which loving hearts were wont to give to the glorious Lord of Hosts: and here he says, "Thou, Lord God." He delights in God and finds music in his name; he is affluent in ascriptions and titles, because his soul is rich in affection. His love was reverent love, adoring love, meditative love, intelligent love, whole-hearted love. It expresses itself by reverence when it fails to compass infinite mercies by descriptions. I want every believer here to be sweetly stirred with this love this morning; I would have you go home and spend an hour this afternoon in contemplating the ever-blessed God, who has done so much for you that you may well say, "What can David say more unto thee?"

My time is flying, but I must have space for another point. David's language is so rich that truly as I take up these words one by one I feel as if I could say with the psalmist, "My soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness." Have we not marrow and fatness here?

IV. David's heart was full of PRAISE, and the praise was first for the *freeness of the grace* which brought him such blessedness. "For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart hast thou done all these great things." Whenever the believer asks why God gave him grace in Christ Jesus he can only resort to one answer,—the Lord's own heart has devised and ordained our salvation. Why did the Lord love you, my brother? Because he would love you, is the only possible reply. In the book of Deuteronomy, seventh chapter and seventh and eighth verses, we have this self-contained love set forth. The Lord did not love the people because they

were numerous, but because he loved them. His love was its own reason. He loved us because he would love us, "according to his own heart." Now, this is one of the things which always must astound us and make us love God, that everything comes from him spontaneously, without anything in us that could produce it or call it forth. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," rolls like thunder over the rebel's head, but to a child of God it is full of music; so that the voice of the Lord is full of majesty to him. Oh, wonder of wonders, that he who passed the fallen angels by, nevertheless, stooped to save unworthy men, for so it seemed good in his sight.

David praised also the *faithfulness* of God. He says, "For thy word's sake." Is not that the ground upon which all mercy is received by the child of God? God has promised it and will keep his word. He never did run back from his covenant yet.

> "As well might he his being quit
> As break his promise or forget."

Jehovah must be true. Oh, what a faithful God has he been to many of us! We can recount the scores and hundreds of times when, if the promise had failed, the disaster would have been irretrievable; but it never has failed. Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised. Ye men of seventy, ye can say that: we who are but lads in the army are nevertheless bold to avow the same. He has helped in every need, and never yet has he been backward in coming to our rescue or supplying our necessities. Glory be to his name. Let us sit down and adore his faithfulness.

Here we may also see David discerning the connection between divine mercy and the Lord Jesus Christ. What if I read it so—"For THY WORD'S sake"—for the sake of

Eternal Logos, the Word that was God, and was with God—for his sake all these mercies have come to us. It is very sweet to see the mark of the pierced hand on every covenant blessing, to receive every boon from the hand that was nailed to the tree for us, and to feel

> "There's ne'er a gift his hand bestows,
> But cost his heart a groan."

This will lead us to praise God for the freeness of the mercy, for the faithfulness of the mercy, and for the mediatorial grace by which every mercy comes to us.

Then the king's heart was taken up with *the greatness of the covenant blessings.* "According to thine own heart, hast thou done all *these great things.*" They were all great. There was not a little mercy among them. All the mercies which we great sinners receive from our great God are inconceivably great, and therefore demand from us the greatest thankfulness. Dwell on the great deliverances, the great promises, the great comforts, the great expectations of the children of God, till your souls are enlarged with gratitude.

Once more David praised God for *his condescending familiarity.* "According to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, *to make thy servant know them.*" They were revealed to David by a prophet, just as Jesus communed with his disciples, and said, "I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye may believe." And yet again, "If it were not so I would have told you." God's mercies are instructions to us. We never know them until God brings them to us and makes us know them, they are their own interpreters; like letters written in cipher they have the clue within themselves. As the prophecies are never understood until they are fulfilled, so the mercies of God are never understood until they are received. Experience teaches. Experience is the master doctor in the University of Christ. When ye know him by testing and

handling him, then is Jesus sweet; when you know his power by testing it in weakness, then you understand its exceeding greatness; when you know his faithfulness in deep affliction and great need, then you see it; and when you taste his mercy under a sense of great sin, then you weep with joy as you perceive it. God alone can make his servants know his gifts. Blessed be God who alone teaches us to profit, and makes his own dear children to sit at his feet. Hath he not said it, "They shall all be taught of the Lord." No school like this; may I for ever be a scholar in it; on the lowest form in that school I would be content to sit and learn eternally. Now give your souls to the sacred lesson. Praise and magnify your God, O ye that love his name!

V. To conclude, not for want of matter, however, but for want of time, David's soul was wound up to HIGH THUGHTS OF GOD, for our text concludes with these words: "Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears." God is great. He is the greatest because he is the best. The old Romans used to say, *optimus maximus*—the best, the greatest. Thou, God, art good, and therefore thou art great. As we drink in the sense of his goodness we cannot help saying, "Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God"—great positively; then great comparatively—"there is none like thee;" yea, greatest of all, superlatively—"neither is there any God beside thee." I have heard of a preacher upon whom a good man's criticism was that he made God great whenever he preached. God forbid that we should ever preach otherwise, and may you, dear hearers, always feel how great God is. I pray you go away with this on your minds—he is too great for me to dare offend him, too greatly good for me to grieve him, too greatly good for me to doubt him. Think of that last. So great, that nothing can be great that I can do for him; so great, that nothing is too great for me to give to him; so

great, that when I give myself away, it is a poor offering compared with his deserts; so great, that when all earth and heaven ring with his praises, they still fall short of his glory; so goodly great and greatly good, that I would be all his, and yield myself entirely up to his will, to be like an atom in a current, borne along by his unresisting will. I would be what he would have me be, do what he would have me do, give what he would have me give, suffer what he would have me suffer; I would be absorbed into him; I would find a heaven in a blessed union with himself, which should prevent for ever any self-assertion, or the setting up of so much as a wish or a thought which would be contrary to his mind. God is great, therefore would I wish others to know him and love him too. All hearts are cold in every place, would God they were melted in this fire: would God they flowed down at his touch in constant worship. Therefore, since he is so great, I will speak great things of him; I will tell it out among the heathen that the Lord reigneth. I would ask for talent, if I may be trusted with it, with which to proclaim him; and if I have small ability, yet with such as I have, grace being given me, I would to the utmost of my ability proclaim the greatness which has already overpowered my spirit. Let him be crowned with majesty; let him be King of kings and Lord of lords, because of all that he has done. Go forth, ye daughters of Jerusalem, and crown your King; throughout the whole of your lives weave chaplets for the Redeemer's brow. Let your lives be psalms, let your garments be vestments, let every meal be a sacrament, let your whole being be transformed into an immortal Hallelujah unto the Lord Most High, for he is greatly to be extolled. O, come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, and give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.

Blessed God, blessed God, what more can thy servant say? He hath not the voice of David, nor David's harp, nor

David's poetic fire, nor David's inspiration, and where even David failed, what more can he say? Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee, and thousands of thy servants here can join in the same declaration. Accept what we speak and what we feel, but cannot utter. Bless thou thy saints for ever. Amen.

SERMON III.

ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH.

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."—Acts ii. 47.

WE are just coming to the most beautiful season of the year—the spring, when everything around us is shaking off the chill grave-clothes of winter, and putting on the beautiful array of a new life. The church of God was in that condition at Pentecost, her winter was past, and the flowers appeared on the earth. She enjoyed the spring breezes, for the breath of the Holy Spirit refreshed her garden; there was spring music—the time of the singing of birds was come, for her preachers testified faithfully of Jesus, and so many and varied were the sweet notes which welcomed the new season, that many nations of men heard in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. There was, also, the spring blossoming, the fig tree put forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes gave a good smell, for all around multitudes inquired, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" and many also avowed their faith in Jesus. There were the spring showers of repentance, the spring sun-gleams of joy in the Holy Ghost and the spring flowers of newly-given hope and faith. May we behold just such another spring

time in all the churches of Jesus Christ throughout the world, and meanwhile let us arouse ourselves suitable to so gladsome a season. Let us rise up and meet the Well-Beloved, and in concert with him let us sow in hope, and look for a speedy upspringing. The Sun of Righteousness is coming forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and the weary night is melting into welcome day; let us hear the Beloved's voice as he cries to us, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

It seems from the text that the additions to the church which were made in the Pentecostal spring-tide did not occur always in one form, sometimes they came in crowds, and at other times by gradual increase. Upon one day there were three thousand added—that is an instance of conversion in the mass, when a nation is born at once. In such a work we are bound to believe; I mean not merely in the possibility of it, but in the probability of it, for it stands to reason that what should convince one man in a particular condition of heart would as readily convince three thousand or thirty thousand if they were in the same state. Granted the same soil, the same seed, the same season, and the same wonder-working God, and I cannot imagine any reason why a limit should be set to results. The Holy Spirit is divine, and consequently he knows how to influence all kinds of men, and he can by the instrumentalities now in use reach just as many as he pleases. I recollect well when I first preached in London a remark made by a friend, which very greatly encouraged me at the time, and has proved true in my experience. When he heard that my little country chapel had been filled by the inhabitants of the village in which I had preached, he gave me hope of filling a far larger place in London; "For," said he, "what will draw two hundred will draw two thousand, and what was useful to a few may be made just as useful to a multitude." I saw at once that it was so. When we are dealing with spiritua

forces we have not to calculate by pounds and ounces, or by so many horse power. We have not to think of quantity. As an illustration: give me fire, I will not bargain for a furnace, give me but a single candle, and a city or a forest may soon be in a blaze. A spark is quite sufficient to begin with, for fire multiplies itself; so give us the truth, a single voice, and the Holy Spirit with it, and none can say where the sacred conflagration will end. One Jonah sufficed to subdue all Nineveh by one monotonous sentence oft repeated, and despite the weakness of our present instrumentality, if God does but bless the gospel, there is no reason why it should not speedily be felt by the whole of London. The sermon preached by Peter at Pentecost was the arrow of the Lord's deliverance to three thousand, and there is no reason why the Lord should not cause one of ours to be the same. Three thousand cannot be converted if only a hundred are present to hear; but with this vast assembly and thousands of smaller ones, within gunshot, why should not the slain of the Lord be many? Assuredly the divine Comforter can as readily bless three millions as three individuals.

But it would appear from our text that the additions to the Pentecostal church were not made in a mass at all times. The Spirit of God was still with them, but their increase was more gradual. "The Lord added to the church daily of such as should be saved." You have seen a heavy shower of rain in the spring; in a moment a big drop has fallen upon the pavement, and before you were ready to escape from it a deluge followed, so plenteous that you half suspected a cloud had been rent in twain right over your head: such a sudden and impetuous shower may serve for a figure of the conversion of three thousand souls at once. But at other times rain has fallen gently, and has continued to descend hour by hour, a soft, warm, spring watering, which in its own way and fashion has done its work of

blessing quite as surely as the heavier downpour. We must be very thankful if we do not see three thousand converted in one day; if we see three hundred every day for ten days, or if we see thirty every day for a hundred days; we ought indeed to be grateful for all success so long as sinners do really come to Jesus. Whether they come in troops, or one by one, we will welcome them; the woman who lost her money was glad to find one piece, although she would have been even more glad to have found a purseful if they had been lost.

I want you to think about additions to the church as they used to occur among the early Christians. Certain people are always talking about the "early church," and very queer notions they seem to have of the aforesaid early church. Their early church was very different from anything we meet with in the Acts of the Apostles, for it was very particular in its architecture, millinery and music. This "early church" could not worship at all unless it had a visible altar, with reredos and frontal, at which gentlemen in gorgeous attire of blue and scarlet and fine linen made postures many, and bowings not a few. The "early church," it seems, believed in baptismal regeneration, transubstantiation, priestcraft, and sacramental efficacy. Well, that may be or may not be; but there was an earlier church which had no such notions, and it is for us to get right away from all such early churches to the earlier church or the earliest church, and there, I warrant you, you shall find no priestcraft, nor nonsense of sacramental efficacy; but simplicity, and truth, and the power of the Holy Ghost. The early church so much admired by Anglicans was a degenerate vine, a field of wheat and tares, a mass leavened with antichristian error, in a word a baptized heathenism. After its own fashion, it set up again the many deities of the heathen, only calling them saints instead of gods, putting the Virgin into the place of Venus, and setting up Peter or Paul in the niches formerly

occupied by Saturn or Mars. Our present "revived early church" is only Paganism with a border of crosses. We are resolved to return to the primitive church of which we read, "then they that gladly received the word were baptized and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." In connection with this church we shall handle our subject, trusting to the Holy Spirit to be with us as with them.

I. First, then, ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH, WHAT ABOUT THEM? "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

It seems to have been the custom in the earliest times for persons who had been converted to Christ to join themselves with the church of Jesus Christ. From that fact, I feel persuaded that they did not conceal their convictions. It is a strong temptation with many to say, "I have believed in Jesus, but that is a matter between God and my own soul, there can be no need that I should tell this to others. Can I not go quietly to heaven and be a Nicodemus, or a Joseph of Arimathea?" To which I reply, Yes, you can go quietly to heaven, and we hope you will do so, but that is a different thing from being cowardly and ashamed of Christ. We shall not object to your being a Nicodemus if you will go with him when he carries spices to the grave of Jesus; and you may be a Joseph of Arimathea if you will attend him when he goes boldly unto Pilate and begs the body of Jesus. Neither of these two brethren were cowardly after the cross had been set up before their eyes, neither were they ashamed to identify themselves with Christ crucified. Follow them, not in the infancy of their love, but in its maturer days. Remember, dear friends, the promise of the gospel runs thus:—"He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved." Do not, I charge you, neglect one half of the command! The gospel commission which we have received is this:—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and

is baptized shall be saved." That is the message as we find it, we did not insert the clause concerning baptism, neither dare we leave it out, or advise you to neglect it. I give you the very words of the Saviour. Do not, therefore, divide the gospel command in order to throw half of it behind your back, but both believe and avow your belief, and be added to the church.

It is quite clear, too, that believers in those days did not try to go to heaven alone. There has been a great deal said in these latter days about being simply a Christian and not joining any particular church—a piece of cant mostly, and in all cases a mistake. In the name of unity this system is preached up, and yet it is clear to all that it is the reverse of unity, and is calculated to put an end to all visible church fellowship. The good people mentioned in our text joined themselves with the church of God in Jerusalem at once. I dare say that even in those days, had they criticised the church, they would have found faults in her, certainly within a few weeks great faults had to be remedied; but these converts felt that the society at Jerusalem was the church of Christ, and, therefore, they joined themselves thereto. All of you can meet with churches of Jesus Christ if you choose to look for them. If you wait for a perfect church, you must wait until you get to heaven; and even if you could find a perfect assembly on earth, I am sure they would not admit you to their fellowship, for you are not perfect yourself. Find out those people who are nearest to the Scriptures, who hold the truth in doctrine and in ordinance, and are most like the apostolic church, and then cast in your lot with them, and you will be blessed in the deed. Consider the matter, and reflect that if it would be right for you to remain out of church fellowship, it must be right for every other believer to remain in the same condition, and then there would be no visible church on earth at all, and no body of people banded together to

maintain the Christian ordinances. Christian fellowship, especially in the breaking of bread, and the maintenance of an evangelistic ministry, would become an impossibility, if no one openly avowed the Saviour's cause. Act then according to your duty, and if you be a Christian, join with Christians; if you love the Master, love the servants; if you love the Captain, unite with the army, and join that regiment of it which you think cleaves closest to the Master's words.

Observe next, that *the persons who were received at Pentecost were added to the church by the Lord.* Does anybody else ever add to the church? Oh, yes, the devil too often thrusts in his servants. Who was it that added Judas, and Ananias and Sapphira, and Simon Magus, and Demas to the church? Who was it that stole forth by night and sowed tares among the wheat? That evil spirit is not dead, he is still busy enough in this department, and continually adds to the church such as are not saved. His are the mixed multitude which infest the camp of Israel, and are the first to fall a lusting; his the Achans who bring a curse upon the tribes; his are those of whom Jude says, "certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation." These adulterate the church, and by so doing, they weaken and defile it, and bring it much grief and dishonor. When *the Lord* adds to the church, that is quite another matter. Moreover the church itself cannot avoid adding some who should not be received. With the greatest possible care and prudence we shall still make mistakes, and some are thus added whom the Lord never added to the church. You have heard Mr. Hill's story of meeting a man in the street one night, who hiccuped up to him and said, "How do you do Mr. Hill? I am one of your converts." "Yes," said Rowland, "I should say you are, but you are none of God's, or else you would not be drunk." Converts of that sort are far too numerous,—converts of the preacher, converts of friends, or converts of a certain fashion of making profession, but not true-born

children of the Lord. Dear friends, I invite all of you who are thinking about joining the church, to search and see whether you are such as the Lord would add to a church. If you are, you have been converted by the Lord, you have been wounded by the Lord, and you have been healed by the Lord, and in the Lord is your righteousness and trust. It has not been man's doing; whoever may have been the instrument, the Holy Spirit has wrought all your works in you. You must have been the subject of a divine agency; something more than you could do for yourself or any man could do for you must have been wrought in you by the Lord. He who made you has new made you. Oh, dear friends, who love the Lord, join in earnest prayer that the Lord would add to the church daily of the saved ones, for we long for such.

Then, *additions to the church of the right kind are described in the text by the words "such as should be saved,"* only those words are not quite a correct translation of the original. I suppose they were borrowed from the vulgar Latin, they are not in the Greek. The translation should be either "The Lord added to the church daily the saved," or "The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." Saved persons were added to the church, and only such are fit to be added. We are not authorized to receive into our number those who desire to be saved, as certain brethren do; I commend their design in so doing, but I am sure they have not Scripture for it. Those who are being saved, in whom the work of salvation is really begun, are the only proper candidates, and these are spoken of in the forty-fourth verse as "believers." The proper persons to be added to the visible church of Christ are those who believe to the salvation of their souls, who are from day to day experiencing the saving power of the name of Jesus by being delivered from sin, by being saved from the customs of the world, by being saved in the sense of sanctified from the various corruptions and lusts which rule among the sons of men.

These are the sort of persons who should be added to the church. So let the question go round,—Am I saved? Have I believed in Jesus? If I have, the process of salvation within me is going on, I am delivered from the reigning, ruling power of sin each day; I am being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and I shall be kept and presented at last spotless before the presence of God with exceeding joy. We set the door wide open to all who are saved, however little their faith may be. The church has no right to exclude any of the saved because their knowledge or experience is not that of advanced believers. If they believe in Jesus and are saved, the babes are of the family and ought to be received, the lambs belong to the flock and ought not to be kept outside the fold. Church membership is not a certificate of advanced Christianity, it is simply the recognition of the profession of saving faith in Jesus Christ. May the Lord add to the church many of the saved, and may we sit at the Lord's table together and sing of redeeming grace and dying love, as those who love the Saviour. Come hither, ye who are the Lord's little ones, but far hence, ye unbelievers and unregenerate.

Again the text says, "The Lord *added* to the church daily such as should be saved." They were really "*added*" to the church. I am afraid certain persons' names are added to the church, but they themselves are not. They increase our numbers, they are added like figures on a slate, but they do not augment our strength. The church is a vital body, and to add to a vitalized body requires a divine operation. The church is like a tree; if you want to add to a tree you cannot take a dead bough and tie it on, that is not adding to it, but encumbering it. To add to a tree there must be grafting done, which requires skill, and the branch, itself alive, must be knit to the living trunk by a living junction, so that the vital sap of the tree shall flow into the grafted bough. A true church is a living thing, and only living men and

women made alive by the Spirit of God are fit to be grafted into it, and the grafting must be made by the Lord himself, otherwise it is no true addition to the church of God. Some members are only tied on to the church, and they are neither use nor ornament, as a dead bough fastened to a tree would add no beauty to it, and would certainly bring forth no fruit. There must be a living union, so that the life which is in the church shall join with the life that is in the man, and the one life of the one quickening Spirit shall flow through the whole of the body. When I hear professors railing at the churches to which they belong, when I see disunion and dissatisfaction among church members, I can well understand that the Lord never added them; but it would be a great mercy to the church if the Lord would take them away. When the Lord adds them, added they are for time and eternity, and they can say to the church, "Where thou dwellest I will dwell; thy people shall be my people, for thy God is my God."

One more point in the text is this, that "the Lord added to the church *daily* such as should be saved." There were additions to the church every day. Some churches, if they have an addition once in twelve months make as much noise over that one as a hen does when she has laid an egg. Now, in the early church they would not have been contented with so small an increase; they would have gone weeping and mourning all over Jerusalem if there had been additions but once in the year. But, cries one, "If we have an addition every month, is not that enough?" Well, it is enough for some people, but when hearts are warm and full of love to Christ, we want him to be praised from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, and we long to have added to the church daily of such as are saved; and why not? But, you reply, we are not daily preaching. That may be, but we ought to be; if not daily in the pulpit, there should be the daily preaching of the life, and if all the members of

the church were daily preaching of Jesus Christ from house to house, a daily sowing would bring a daily reaping; if we were daily praying with earnestness, and daily using every effort we could by the power of the Holy Spirit, and if daily the church abode in fellowship with her Master, we should see added to it daily of those who are saved. "Why do we not see it," says one, "in many churches?" Why, because many churches do not believe in it. If there were many converts added to them, they would say, "Yes, we hear of a great many additions, but what are they? We hope they will hold on," or some such ungenerous remark. If to some churches there should come a large increase, there are brethren who would not believe it to be genuine, and would despise the little ones. God will not cause his children to be born where there are none to nurse them; he will be sure not to send converts to churches which do not want them. He will not have his lambs snarled over as if they were so many young wolves, and kept out in the cold for months together to see whether they will howl or bleat. He loves to see his people watchful *for* new converts, and watchful *over* them. The Good Shepherd would have us feed his lambs, gather them in from the cold field of the world, and carry them to some warm sheltered place, and nurture them for him. When he sees a church ready to do that, then will he send them his lambs, but not till then.

II. That brings me to the second point, which is this:— ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH, UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS MAY WE EXPECT THEM ON A LARGE SCALE?

Turn to the chapter again and we shall have our answer. We may expect additions to every church of God on a large scale when she has first of all *a Holy Ghost ministry.* Peter was no doubt a man of considerable natural abilities, he was also a warm-hearted, fervent man, just such an one as would have power over his fellow-men, because of the enthusiasm which dwelt in himself; but for all this Peter had never

seen three thousand persons converted until he had been baptized with the Holy Ghost. After the tongue of fire had sat upon Peter's head, he was another man from what he had ever been before. If, dear brethren, we are to see large multitudes converted, the power of the preacher must lie in his being filled with the Holy Ghost. I fear me that many churches would not be content with a ministry whose power would lie solely in the Holy Spirit. I mean this, that they judge a minister by his elaboration of style, or beauty of imagery, or degree of culture; and if he be a man of such refined speech that only a select few can understand him, he is a favorite with what is considered to be "a respectable church." Some despise a preacher whom the common people hear gladly, who uses great plainness of speech, and discards the words which man's wisdom teaches. They complain that he is only fit to address the tag-rag of the people, and for this they turn their backs upon him. They want not the fire of the Spirit, but the flash of oratory; not the rushing wind of the Holy Ghost, but the perfumed zephyrs of "high culture." The jingle of rhetoric has more attraction for them than the certain sound of the trumpets of the sanctuary. May God have mercy upon the church that has got into such a miserable state, and is so wanting in true education, for where a church is educated by the Lord she understands that salvation is not by might nor power, but by the Spirit of God. Plainness of speech is the perfection of gospel utterance, for the Master himself so spake. Men of studied elocution, who can pile up a climax, and cap it with a piece of poetry, are not the men whom God the Holy Spirit honors to be soul-winners. Have you not heard fine orations, which have perfectly charmed you by their beauty, and yet after you have heard them you have felt that if the Lord did bless such sermons to the conversion of anybody it would be a novelty upon the face of the earth, for there was little of Christ in them, and none of the unction of the Holy

One? Great sermons are often great sins, and "intellectual treats" are frequently a mess of savory pottage made of unclean meats.

A Holy Ghost ministry, if Peter be the model, is one which is bold, clear, telling, persuasive—one which tells men that Jesus is the Christ, and that they have crucified him, and calls upon them to repent and turn unto the Lord. The truly sent preacher speaks out straight and plain, and home to the conscience, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. The Holy Ghost minister chooses Jesus for his theme, as Peter did. He did not speak to them about modern science and the way of twisting Scriptures into agreement with it. He cared nothing for the maundering of the Rabbis or the philosophies of the Greeks; but he went right on setting forth Christ crucified and Christ risen from the dead. When he had preached Christ, he made a pointed personal appeal to them and said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you." He was not afraid to give such an exhortation; he was not like some who say, "We must warn sinners and then leave them; we may preach Christ to them, but may not bid them repent;" but he came boldly forth with the gospel exhortation and left it to his Master to send it home by the power of the Holy Spirit. That was the sort of sermon which God blesses. The man was full of God, and God shone through the man, and worked with him, and remission of sins was sought for and was found through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by a vast number of souls. May God send to all his churches a Holy Ghost ministry!

But if there are to be many additions to the church it must next be *a Holy Ghost church.* Note that. What is a Holy Ghost church? Well, it is a church baptized into his power, and this will be known first by its being *steadfast.* Read the 42d verse, "And they continued steadfast." He will not bless a church which is excited and then relapses,

is carried away by every novelty, and does not know what it believes, but a church which abides in Jesus and in his truth.

They were steadfast in four points. *In the apostle's doctrine.* They were a doctrinal church, they believed in being steadfast in fixed truth; they did not belong to the shifty generation of men who plead that their views are progressive, and that they cannot hold themselves bound by a plain creed. Dear brethren and sisters, never give up the grand old truths of the gospel. Let no excitement, even though it be the whirlwind of a revival, ever sweep you off your feet concerning the great doctrines of the cross. If God does not save men by truth he certainly will not save them by lies, and if the old gospel is not competent to work a revival, then we will do without the revival; we will keep the old truth, anyhow, come what may! Our flag is nailed to the mast.

Next they were steadfast *in fellowship.* They loved each other, and they continued doing so. They conversed with one another about the things of God, and they did not give up the converse. They helped each other when they were in need, and they continued in such liberality. They were true brethren, and their fellowship was not broken.

Next they continued *in the breaking of bread,* which is a delightful ordinance, and never to be despised or underestimated. As often as they could they showed Christ's death till he should come. They delighted to enjoy the dear memorials of his sacred passion, both in the assembly and from house to house.

They remained also steadfast *in prayer.* Mark that! God cannot bless a church which does not pray, and churches must increase in supplication if they would increase in strength. Sacred importunity must besiege the throne of God, and then the blessing will be yielded. Oh, children of the heavenly King, ye hamper the Spirit and hinder the blessing if ye restrain prayer.

Here were four points, then, in which the church was steadfast, and God blessed it.

Note next that it was a *united* church. We read of them that they were so united that they had all things in common, and they continued daily with one accord in the temple. There were no parties among them, no petty strifes and divisions, they loved the Lord too well for that. The Sacred Dove takes his flight when strife comes in. If you divide the church within itself, you also divide it from the mighty operations of the Spirit of God. Be ye full of love one to another, and then ye may expect that God the Holy Ghost will fill you with blessing.

They were a *generous* church as well as a united church. They were so generous that they threw in their property into a common stock lest any should be in need. They were not communists, they were Christians; and the difference between a communist and a Christian is this—a communist says, "All yours is mine;" while a Christian says, "All mine is yours;" and that is a very different thing. The one is for getting, and the other for giving. These believers acted in such a generous spirit one to another, that it seemed as if nobody accounted that what he had belonged to himself, but generously gave of it to the necessities of others. I do not believe the Lord will ever bless a stingy church. There are churches whose minister has anxiously to inquire how he shall provide food and raiment for his household, and yet these churches are not very poor. There are churches where more is paid per annum for cleaning the shoes of the worshipers than they spend upon the cause of Christ; and where this is the case no great good will be done. The Lord will never bless a synagogue of misers; if they are churls they may keep their worship to themselves, for God is known as a generous God, and he loves to have generous people.

Again, these people were in such a condition that *their houses and homes were holy places.* I want you to notice

this, that they were breaking bread from house to house, and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. They did not think that religion was meant only for Sundays, and for what men now-a-days call the House of God. Their own houses were houses of God, and their own meals were so mixed and mingled with the Lord's Supper that to this day the most cautious student of the Bible cannot tell when they left off eating their common meals, and when they began eating the Supper of the Lord. They elevated their meals into diets for worship; they so consecrated everything with prayer and praise that all around them was holiness unto the Lord. I wish our houses were thus dedicated unto the Lord, so that we worshipped God all the day long, and made our dwellings temples for the living God. A great dignitary not long ago informed us that there is great efficacy in daily prayer in the parish church; he even asserted that, however few might attend, it was more acceptable than any other worship. I suppose that prayer in the parish church with nobody to join in it but the vicar and the beadle is far more effectual than the largest family gathering in the house at home. This was evidently his lordship's idea, and I suppose the literature which his lordship was best acquainted with was of such an order as to have led him to draw that inference. Had he been acquainted with the Bible and such old fashioned books, he would have learned rather differently, and if some one should make him a present of a New Testament, it might perhaps suggest a few new thoughts to him. Does God need a house? He who made the heavens and the earth, does he dwell in temples made with hands? What gross ignorance is this! No house beneath the sky is more holy than the place where a Christian lives, and eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and praises the Lord in all that he does, and there is no worship more heavenly than that which is presented by holy families, devoted to his fear. To sacrifice home worship

to public worship is a most evil course of action. Morning and evening devotion in a cottage is infinitely more pleasing in the sight of God than all the cathedral pomp which delights the carnal eye and ear. Every truly Christian household is a church, and as such it is competent for the discharge of any function of divine worship, whatever it may be. Are we not all priests? Why do we need to call in others to make devotion a performance? Let every man be a priest in his own house. Are you not all kings if you love the Lord? Then make your houses palaces of joy and temples of holiness. One reason why the early church had such a blessing was because her members had such homes. When we are like them we shall have "added to the church daily of the saved."

I have already mentioned that they were a *praying* church, and that accounted for the increase. They were a *devout* church, a church which did not forget any part of the Lord's will. They were a baptized church, and they were a bread-breaking church, so that they were obedient to Christ in both ordinances. They were also a *joyful* church. We find that they ate their meat with gladness. Their religion was not of the sombre hue which comes of doubting and fearing. They were believers in a risen Redeemer, and though they knew that they would soon be persecuted, they so rejoiced that everybody could read heaven shining on their faces, and might have known that they believed in the blessed gospel, for they were a blessed people. They were also a *praising* church, for it is said they "praised God, and they had favor with all the people." Oh, may the Lord make this church and all the churches around us to be as holy and joyful as that apostolic community.

III. I must conclude with a word upon that which I wanted most of all to say: WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DO THESE ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH BRING TO US?

To you who are to be added to the church to-night, and

I thank God you are so many,* it involves this responsibility:—Do not come in among us unless you are saved. Judge yourselves with honesty, examine yourselves with care, and although you have gone as far as you have, yet to-night, before I give you the right hand of fellowship, if you are conscious that you are not what you profess to be, I do beseech you still stand back. If you are the weakest of the weak, and the feeblest of the feeble, yet, if you are sincere, come and welcome; but if you are not sincere, do not add to your sin by taking upon you a profession which you cannot keep up, and by declaring a falsehood before the Lord; for if you do so, remember you will not have lied unto man, but unto God himself in daring to avow yourselves Christians, while you are unbelievers. Come and welcome if you are believers, and when you come, remember that the responsibility which you undertake in God's strength, is that you live to prove that you have really given yourself up to the church, that you mean to serve Christ with all your heart, that you will seek to promote the holiness and unity of the church which you join, and will strive to do nothing to dishonor her good name or to grieve the Spirit of God. In joining the church, pray to be continued steadfast in doctrine and fellowship. Pray for more grace, that you may be filled with the Spirit of God. Do not come in to weaken us, we are weak enough already. Do not come in to adulterate our purity, we have enough impurity even now. Pray that God may make you a real increase to our prayerfulness, to our holiness, to our earnestness, to our higher life, and then come and welcome, and the Lord be with you!

As for us who shall receive the converts, what is our responsibility? First, to welcome them heartily. Let us open wide the door of our hearts and say, "Come and welcome," for Jesus Christ's sake. After welcoming them we must watch over them, and when so many are added, double

* One hundred and seven were to be received in the evening.

care is needed. Of course, no two pastors can possibly watch over this vast assembly of four thousand five hundred professed believers. Let the watching be done by all the members; by the officers of the church first, and then by every individual. I am very thankful that out of the cheering number to be brought in to-night the larger proportion belong to the families of the church. My brethren and sisters already in Christ, it is fortunate for these young people that they have you to watch over them. Never let it be said that any parent discourages his child, that any guardian discourages the young after they have come forward and avowed their faith. If you notice faults, remember you have faults yourselves; do not tauntingly throw the failing in their teeth as some have unkindly done. Guide them and cheer them on. Help their weakness, bear with their ignorance and impetuosity, and correct their mistakes. I charge you, my beloved sisters, be nursing mothers in the church, and you, my brethren, be fathers to these young people, that they may be enabled by your help through God's Spirit to hold on their way. It is an evil thing to receive members, and never care for them afterwards. Among so many some must escape our supervision, but if all the members of the church were watchful this could not be; each would have some one to care for him, each would have a friend to whom to tell his troubles and his cares. Watch over the church, then, I pray you.

And ye elder ones, myself chiefly among you, let our example be such as they can safely follow. Let them not come into the church to find us cold. Let us try, as we see these young ones coming among us, to grow young again in heart and sympathy. In receiving these new members we ought to have, dear brethren, an access of new strength, and a more vigorous life. The church ought to be giving out more light, for here are fresh lamps; she should be doing more for Christ, here are new workers; she should be her-

self stronger, more daring, more useful, for here are bold soldiers newly enlisted. I think, as I see new converts brought in, I see the Lord lighting up new stars to gladden this world's night; I see him swearing in new soldiers to fight Christ's battles; I see him sending out new sowers to sow the plains of the world for the ever-glorious harvest, and I bless and praise and magnify his name with gladness of soul. Heavenly Father, keep them, yea, keep us all, lest any of us, though added to the church on earth, should not be added to the church in heaven. Keep us so that when the muster-roll is read for the last time, we who have had our names inscribed among the saints on earth may find them written among the blessed in heaven. May God grant it, and he shall have all the glory. Amen.

SERMON IV.

A LESSON FROM THE LIFE OF KING ASA.

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars."—2 Chronicles xvi. 9.

OUR text leads us to speak upon historical matters, and for this I shall by no means apologize, although I have sometimes heard very foolish professors speak slightingly of the historical part of Scripture. Remember that the historical books were almost the only Scripture possessed by the early saints; and from those they learned the mind of God. David sang the blessedness of the man who delighted in the law of the Lord, yet he had only the first five books, and, perhaps, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, all books of history, in which to meditate day and night. The psalmist himself spoke most lovingly of these books, which were the only statutes and testimonies of the Lord to him, with, perhaps, the addition of the Book of Job. Other saints delighted in the histories of the word before the more spiritual books came in their way at all. If rightly viewed, the histories of the Old Testament are full of instruction. They supply us both with warnings and examples in the realm of practical morals; and hidden within their letter, like pearls in oyster shells, lie grand spiritual truths couched in allegory and

metaphor. I may say of the least important of all the books what our Lord said of children, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." To take away from Holy Writ involves a curse upon the daring deed; may we never incur the penalty! All Scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable; be it ours to gain the profit. Let us see whether we cannot get a lesson from the life of King Asa.

We commence by noticing *who he was, and what he had done in his better days,* for this will help to understand more clearly the fault into which he fell. He was a man of whom it is said that his heart was perfect before God all his days. It is a great thing to have said of any one; indeed, it is the greatest commendation which can be pronounced upon mortal man. When the heart, the intention, the master-affection is right, the man is reckoned a good man before the Lord, notwithstanding that there may be a thousand things which are not commendable—yea, and some things which are censurable in the man's outward career. Asa is noticeable in the early part of his life for the fact that he set up the worship of God, and carried it out with great diligence, though his mother was an idolator, and his father, Abijah, was little better. He had enjoyed no training as a youth that could lead him aright, but quite the contrary; yet he was very decided, even in the first days of his reign, for the Lord his God, and acted in all things with an earnest desire to glorify Jehovah, and to lead his people away from all idols to the worship of the true God. Now, a life may begin well, and yet be clouded ere its close; the verdure of earnestness may fade into the sere and yellow leaf of backsliding. We may have the grace of God in our earliest days, but unless we have day by day fresh help from on high, dead flies may pollute the ointment and spoil the sweet odor of our lives. We shall need to watch against temptation so long as we are in this wilderness of sin. Only in heaven are we out of gunshot of the devil. Though we may have

been kept in the ways of the Lord, as Asa was, for fifty or sixty years, yet if left by the Master for a single moment we shall bring discredit upon his holy name.

In the middle of his reign Asa was put to the test by a very serious trial. He was attacked by the Ethiopians, and they came against him in mighty swarms. What a host to be arrayed against poor little Judah—an army of a million footmen and three hundred thousand chariots! All the host that Asa could muster—and he did his best—was but small compared to the mighty band; and it appeared as if the whole land would be eaten up, for the people seemed sufficient to carry away Judea by handfuls. But Asa believed in God, and therefore when he had mustered his little band he committed the battle to the Lord his God. Read attentively that earnest believing prayer which he offered. "And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee." How grandly he threw all his burden upon God! He declared that he rested in the Most High, and believed that God could as well achieve the victory by a few and feeble folk as by a vast army; after this prayer he marched to the battle with holy confidence, and God gave him the victory. The power of Ethiopia was broken before him, and Judah's armies returned laden with the spoil. You would not have thought that a man who could perform that grand action would become, a little after, full of unbelief; but the greatest faith of yesterday will not give us confidence for to-day, unless the fresh springs which are in God shall overflow again. Even Abraham, who at one time staggered not at the promise through unbelief, yet did stagger sometime afterwards about a far less difficult matter. The greatest of God's servants, if their Lord hides his face, soon sink

even below the least; all the strength of the strongest lies in him.

After Asa had thus by divine strength won a great victory, he did not, as some do, grow proud of it, but he set to work, in obedience to a prophetic warning, to purge his country by a thorough reformation; he did it, and did it well. He did not show any partiality towards the rich and great in his country who were guilty of the worship of false gods, for the queen-mother was a great fosterer of idolatry, and she had a grove of her own with a temple in it, in which was her own peculiar idol; but the king put her away from her eminent position, and took her idol, and not merely broke it, but stamped upon it and burned it, with every sign of contempt, at the brook Kidron, into which ran the sewage of the temple, to let the people know that, whether in high places or among the poor, there should be nothing left to provoke the Lord throughout the land. This was well done. Oh that such a reformation might happen in this land, for the country is beginning to be covered with idols and mass-houses! Everywhere they are setting up the altars of their breaden deity, shrines to the queen of heaven, the crucifix and the saints, while the spiritual worship of God is put aside to make room for vain shows and spiritual masquerades. The God of the Reformation—how much is he forgotten now-a-days! Oh for a return of the days of Knox, and his covenanting brethren! Asa was for a root and branch reform, and he went through with it bravely. You would not have thought that a man so thorough—a man who, like Levi of old, knew not his own mother when it came to the matter of serving God, but made "through stitch" with it, as the old writers used to say—you would not have supposed that he would be the man who, when he came into another trial, would be running after an idolator and cringing before him and praying him to give him his help. *Alas, the best of men are men at the best!* God alone is unchangeable. He alone is

good always, or indeed at all. "There is none good save one, that is God." We are only good as he makes us good; and if his hand be withdrawn even for a moment, we start aside like a deceitful bow, or a broken bone which has been badly set. Alas, how soon are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war broken, if the Lord uphold not! Asa who could do marvels, and who walked so well and thoroughly before his God, yet nevertheless came to do foolishly and bring upon himself lifelong chastisement.

I have thus brought before you his character, because it was most fitting to start with this; it was due to his memory, and due to ourselves; for we must remember that, whatever we shall have to say against him, he was assuredly a child of God. His heart was right; he was a sincere, genuine, gracious believer. If any object that he had grievous faults, and therefore could not be a child of God, I shall be obliged to answer that they must first of all produce a faultless child of God this side heaven before they will have sufficient ground for such an objection. I find that the holiest of men in Scripture had their imperfections, with the sole exception of our Master, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, in whom was no sin. His garments were whiter than any fuller could make them, but all his servants had their spots. He is light, and in him is no darkness at all, but we, with all the brightness his grace has given us, are poor dim lamps at best. I make no exception even of those who claim perfection, for I have no more faith in their perfection than in the Pope's infallibility. There is enough of the earthen vessel left about the best of the Lord's servants to show that they are earthen, and that the excellency of the heavenly treasure of divine grace which is put within them may be clearly seen to be of God and not of them.

Now, we shall turn to notice the GRAVE ERROR INTO WHICH ASA FELL—the foolishness for which the prophet

rebuked him. He was threatened by Baasha, the king of the neighboring territory of Israel; he was not directly assailed by war, but Baasha began to build a fortress which would command the passages between the two countries, and prevent the people of Israel from coming to settle in the land of Judah, or make their annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Now, one would naturally have expected, from Asa's former conduct, that he would either have thought very little of Baasha, or else that he would have taken the case before God, as he did before in the matter of the Ethiopians. But this was a smaller trouble altogether, and somehow, I fancy, it was because it was a smaller trouble Asa thought that he could manage it very well himself by the help of an arm of flesh. In the case of the invasion by countless hordes of Ethiopians, Asa must have felt that it was of no use calling in Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, or asking any of the nations to help him, for with all their help he would not have been equal to the tremendous struggle. Therefore he was driven to God. But this being a smaller trial, he does not seem to have been so thoroughly divorced from confidence in man; but he looked about him, and thought that Ben-hadad, the heathen king of Syria, might be led to attack the king of Israel, and so draw him away from building the new fort, divide his attention, cripple his resources, and give Judah a fine opportunity of attacking him. Believers frequently behave worse in little trials than in great ones. I have known some children of God who have borne with equanimity the loss of almost everything they had, who have been disturbed and distracted and led into all sorts of doubt and mistrust by troubles that were scarcely worth the mentioning. How is it that vessels which bear a hurricane may, nevertheless, be driven upon a sandbank when there is but a capful of wind—that ships which have navigated the broad ocean have yet foundered in a narrow stream? It only proves this, that it is not the severity of

the trial, it is the having or not having of God's presence that is the main thing; for in the great trial with the Ethiopians God's grace gave Asa faith, but in the little trial about Baasha, king of Israel, Asa had no faith, and began to look about him for help from men.

Observe that Asa went off to Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, who was a worshipper of a false god, with whom he ought to have had no connection or alliance whatever; and, what was worse, he induced Ben-hadad to break his league with Baasha. Here was a child of God teaching the ungodly to be untrue—a man of God becoming an instructor of Satan, teaching a heathen to be false to his promise. This was policy. This is the kind of thing which the kings of the earth practice towards one another; they are always ready to break treaties, though bound by the most solemn pledges. They make but light of covenants. The great matter with ambassadors even now-a-days is to see which can entangle the other, for, as a statesman once said, "An ambassador is a person who is sent abroad to lie for the good of his country." Oh, the tricks, plots, deceptions, equivocations, and intrigues of diplomacy! No chapter in human history shows up our fallen nature in more mournful colors. Asa, I have no doubt, thought that all was fair in war. He took the common rule, the common standard of mankind, and went upon that; whereas, as a child of God, he ought to have scorned anything that was dishonorable or untrue; and as to saying to a heathen king, "Break thy league with Baasha, and make a league with me"—why, if he had been in a right state of heart, he would sooner have lost his tongue than have uttered such disgraceful words. But child of God as he was, when he once got off the plain simple way of believing in God, and taking his trouble to God, there was no telling what he would do. When you set the helm of your vessel towards the point to which you mean to steer, and steer right on, whatever comes in your way, then your

course will be well enough if you have a motive power within independent of wind and tide; but when you take to tacking this way, then you will have in due time to tack the other way; and when policy makes you do this wrong thing, policy will lead you to do another wrong thing, and so on, to a most lamentable degree. When our walk is with the Lord, it is a safe, holy, honorable walk, but the way of the flesh is evil, and ends in shame. If you follow the way of the world, though always a crowded way, it will turn out before long to be a miserable, pettifogging, cringing, humiliating, wretched way, dishonorable to the true-born heir of heaven. Dust shall be the serpent's meat, and if we practice the crawling, twisting, slimy arts of the serpent, we shall have to eat the dust too. Should a child of God degrade himself in that fashion? If he acts as he should act, he acts like a nobleman, nay, like a prince of the blood imperial of heaven, for is he not a son of God, one of heaven's true aristocracy? But when he degenerates to acting as worldlings do, then, alas! he stains his garments in the mire. I charge you, my dear brethren and sisters, to look well to this. Perhaps I may be speaking as God's mouth to some of you who are now entering upon a testing time, a trouble in the family, a trial in business, or a difficulty in reference to a contemplated marriage, and you are asking, "What course shall I take?" You know what a man of the world would do, and it has been suggested to you that such a course is the right one for you to follow. My dear brother, remember you are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world; mind you act accordingly. If you are a worldly man, and do as worldly men do, why I must leave you, for them that are without God judgeth; but if you are a man of God, and an heir of heaven, I beseech you, do not follow custom, or do a wrong thing because others would do it, or do a little evil for the sake of a great good, but in your confidence possess your soul, and abide faithful to

conscience and to the eternal law of rectitude. Let others do as they please, but as for you, set the Lord always before you, and let integrity and uprightness preserve you. Ask the Lord to help you. Is it not written that he will with the temptation make a way of escape? "Cast thy burden upon the Lord; he will sustain thee. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved." Do not put forth your hand to iniquity. You may, in order to help yourself, do in five minutes what you cannot undo in fifty years; and you may bring upon yourself a lifelong series of trial by one single unbelieving action. Beware of staying yourself on Egypt and sending for help to Assyria, for these will distress you, but help you not. Cry, "Lord, increase our faith!" That is what you greatly need in the trying hour, lest you should, like Asa, first of all turn from confidence in God, and then, looking to an arm of flesh, should be tempted to use illegitimate means in order to induce the creature to let you rely upon it.

Asa, having advanced so far in the wrong path, did worse still, if worse could be; for he took of the gold and silver which belonged to the house of the Lord, in order to purchase therewith the alliance of the Syrian monarch. I will say nothing about what belonged to his own house. He might do as he liked with that so long as he did not spend it upon sin, but he took of the treasure that belonged to the house of the Lord, and gave it to Ben-hadad to bribe him to break his league with Baasha, and be in league with himself. Thus God was robbed that the unbelieving king might find help in an arm of flesh. And, "Will a man rob God?" Yet a Christian never doubts God, and looks to the creature, without robbing him. If you rob him of nothing else, you rob him of his honor. Shall a father find his child trusting a stranger rather than his own sire? Shall the husband see his wife putting confidence in his enemy? Will not that rob him of that which is far more precious than gold? Is it not

a breach of that undivided affection, and that complete confidence, which ought to exist in the conjugal relationship? And shall I mistrust my heavenly Father, my almighty helper, and put confidence in a poor, broken reed? Shall I cast my burden upon a poor fellow-sinner, and forget to rest in my Saviour? Shall the Well-beloved of my soul be only trusted in fair weather? and shall I have such a sorry opinion of him that, when it comes to a little storm, I run to some one else and ask him to be my refuge? Beloved, let it not be so with us, or we shall surely grieve the Lord and bring ourselves into much perplexity. Have we not been guilty enough of this already? Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we bent upon grieving his Holy Spirit? Can we not take warning from Asa? Need we run upon this rock when we can see the wrecks of others all around? The Lord grant that we may take heed, according to his word!

So this good man, by his want of faith, fell into many sins; for I am compelled to add that he had to bear the blame of the consequences of his conduct, for when Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, came up and attacked Israel, he did not content himself with a battle or two, but he fell to plundering the Israelites and murdering them by wholesale, so that great sorrows were brought upon the people of Israel. And who was to blame for these sorrows but the king of Judah who had hired the Syrians for that very purpose? He who ought to have been a brother to the Israelites became their destroyer, and every time the cruel sword of the Syrians slew the women and children of Israel, the poor afflicted people had Asa to thank for it. The beginning of sin is like the letting out of waters; none can foresee what devastation the floods may cause. Brethren, we can never tell what may be the consequences of one wrong action; we may kindle a fire in the forest, merely to warm our own hands, but where the sparks may fly, and how many leagues the conflagration may spread, an angel cannot prophesy. Let us jealously keep away from

every doubtful deed, lest we bring evil consequences upon others as well as ourselves. If we carry no matches, we shall cause no explosions. Oh, for a holy jealousy, a deep conscientiousness, and, above all, a solemn conscientiousness on the point of faith! To rest in the Lord—that is our business; to stay ourselves only upon him—that is our sole concern. "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." Unbelief is in itself idolatry; unbelief leads us to look to the creature, which is folly; and to look to the creature is, in effect to worship the creature, to put it into God's place, and so to grieve God, and set up a rival in the holy place.

I want you to listen yet a little while longer to this story of Asa. It came to pass that Asa's hiring Ben-hadad turned out to be a fine thing for him, and, in the judgment of everybody who looked on, I dare say that it was said that it was a fortunate stroke of business. According to God's mind, the king's course was evil, but it did not turn out badly for him politically. Now, many people in the world judge actions by their immediate results. If a Christian does a wrong thing, and it prospers, then at once they conclude he was justified in doing it; but, ah! brethren, this is a poor blind way of judging the actions of men and the providence of God. Do you not know that there are *devil's providences as well as God's providences?* I mean this. Jonah wanted to go to Tarshish to flee from God, and he went down to Joppa; and what? Why, he found a ship going to Tarshish. What a providence! What a providence! Are you so foolish as to view it in that light? I do not think Jonah was of that mind when he cried unto God out of the deeps. When the chief priests and Pharisees would take Jesus, they found Judas ready to betray him. Was this also a providence? May not Satan have some hand in the arrangement which lays a weapon so near a murderer's hand, or renders robbery and fraud so easy? Do you think it an instance of divine

goodness that the tares often grow plentifully when the wheat suffers from drought. Often have we observed people who wanted to do wrong, and things have just happened rightly to help them ; and they have all said, " What a providence ! " Ah, but a providence that was meant to test and try, not a providence that was intended to aid and abet in the doing of a wrong thing ; a providence not to rejoice in, but concerning which we are taught to pray, " Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." A wrong is a wrong, whatever comes of it. If by uttering one falsehood you could become a rich man forever, it would not change the nature of the falsehood. If by doing one wrong transaction you could rid yourself from all liabilities in business, and be henceforth in competent circumstances, that would not, before God, take off the edge of the evil, nay, not a single jot. God was pleased, for wise reasons, to allow the policy of his erring servant Asa to prosper, but now you will see that Asa was put in a worse place than ever because of it.

The trial of Asa's spirit, the testing of his unswerving faithfulness, whether he would walk before God or not, became more severe than before, for God sent his servant the prophet to him, and he said to him, " When you came to God and trusted about the Ethiopians, did not God prosper you ? Though there were so many of them, did not the Lord give you the victory ? And now you have gone away from your faith, you have lost a good blessing by it ; for if you had trusted in God, you would have gone to war against Baasha and Ben-hadad, and you would have beaten them both, and your own kingdom would have grown strong by the putting down of these rival kingdoms. But you have lost that ; you have acted very foolishly, and God means to chasten you for it, for from this very day you will have no peace, but you will have war so long as you are a king." Now, observe, if King Asa had met with a trouble when he acted unjustifiably, he would have been humble, I have no

doubt. Then he would have seen how wrong he was, and he would have repented; but inasmuch as what he had done did not bring disaster with it, and God did not chasten him, the king's heart grew proud, and he said, "Who is this fellow that he should come to tell his king his duty? Does he think I do not know, as well as he can tell me, what is right and what is wrong? Put the arrogant intruder in prison?" When a prophet came to Rehoboam, who was a bad king, Rehoboam did not put him in prison; he respected and reverenced the word of the Lord. A bad man may do better than a good man on some one particular occasion; and so Rehoboam did better in that matter than Asa did. But Asa was now all wrong, he was in a high hectoring spirit; and this was but what we might have expected, for whenever a man will cringe before his fellow-men, you may be sure he is beginning to walk proudly before his God. In his haughtiness of heart he put the prophet in prison. Instead of weeping and humbling himself for what he had done, he imprisoned his reprover; and then, being in an irritable temper and a domineering humor, he began to oppress certain of his people. I do not know who they may have been, but probably they were godly persons who sympathized with the prophet, and said, "We shall surely meet with a terrible judgment for dealing thus with God's servant." Perhaps they spoke freely about it; and so he put them in prison too. Thus God's own child had become the persecutor of God's servant, and of other faithful ones. Oh, it is very sad, very sad! Well might God then resolve that the angry king should smart for his faults very severely, that the rod should come home to his bone and his flesh, and render his remaining days exceedingly sorrowful. O beloved friends, among your most earnest prayers pray God never to let your sins prosper; for if they do, they will breed a gangrene in your spirit, which will lead on to far more dangerous diseases of the soul, and will inevitably entail upon you a dreary inheritance of afflic-

tion. God does not always whip his children the next minute after they do wrong; sometimes he tells them that the rod will come, and so makes them smart in apprehension before they smart in actual experience, for they are thinking of what it may be, and that may be even a worse trial to them than the trial itself. But as surely as they are his own peculiar people, they must and shall be taught that sin is an exceedingly great evil, and they shall have no joy of their dalliance with it.

Thus I have shown you who Asa was, and what faults he fell into, and how this led to other faults; and now we have to show you *what God did with him when he came to a close reckoning.* "Now," he seemed to say, "I will take you in hand myself," and he sent him a disease in his feet—a very painful disease too. He had to suffer night and day; he was tormented with it, and found no rest. God's own hand was heavy upon him; some of us know to our cost that disease in the feet can become a very grievous affliction, second indeed to none, unless it be a malady of the brain. Now did the king learn that embroidered slippers give no ease to gouty feet, and that sleep flies when disease bears rule. This should have driven Asa to repentance, but, to show that afflictions of themselves will not set a man right, Asa had fallen into such an unbelieving spirit that, instead of sending to God for help, and crying for relief to him who sent the disease, he sent for the physicians. It is not wrong to send for physicians, it is quite right; but it is very wrong to send for physicians in place of crying to God, thus putting the human agency before the divine; besides, it is very probable that these physicians were only heathenish conjurors, necromancers, and pretenders to magical arts, and could not be consulted without implicating the patient in their evil practices. Though Asa would not approve of their heathenism, yet he might think, "Well, they are famous for their cures, and who they may be is not so

much my concern; I will put up with that; if they can cure me they may come." So his unbelief deprived him of the cure which God could readily enough have given him, and he had his physicians and their physic, but they were miserable comforters to him, giving him no relief, and probably causing him to suffer more than he would have suffered without them. They were physicians of no value, and their medicines were a delusion. How often is it so when we persist in looking away from God. He who has God has all, but he who has all besides God has really nothing at all.

Asa's life after that period was a life of war and pain. His evening was clouded, and his sun set in tempest. Have you never noticed the career of David? What a happy life David's was up to one point! In his youth he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, but he was very merry. What joyful psalms he used to sing when he was a humble shepherd-boy! And when afterwards he was an exile in the caves of Engedi, how gloriously he poured out notes of gratitude and joy! He was at that period, and for years after, one of the happiest of men. But that hour when he walked on the roof of his house, and saw Bathsheba, and gave way to his unholy desires, put an end to the happy days of David; and though he was a child of God, and God never cast him away, yet his heavenly Father never ceased to chasten him. From that day his life teems with trouble—troubles from his own children one after another, ingratitude from his subjects, and annoyance from his enemies. Afflictions sprang up for him as plenteously as hemlock in the furrows. He became a weeping monarch instead of a rejoicing one. The whole tenor of his life is changed; a sombre shade is cast over his entire image. You recognize him as the same man, but his voice is broken; his music is deep bass, he cannot reach the high notes of the scale. From the hour in which he sinned he began to sorrow more and more. So will it be with us if we are not watchful. We may have led very

happy lives in Christ up to this moment, and we know the Lord will not cast us away, for he doth not cast away his people whom he did foreknow; but if we begin to walk distrustfully, and adopt wrong actions, and dishonor his name, he may from this moment say, "You only have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities. Because I love you I will chasten you, for I chasten every son whom I love. And now, because you have thus gone astray, you shall be filled with your own backslidings. Your own vanity shall become your vexation throughout the rest of your days." Asa does not appear to have had any peace until at last he fell asleep, and then, I trust, his dying bed was as sweetly perfumed with penitence and pardon as his funeral couch was odoriferous with fragrant spices. The sweet spices of forgiving love and reviving faith were there, and he died rejoicing in his God, through the great sacrifice; brought back after a time of wandering, the cloudy day at last ending in a calm, bright evening. But who wishes to go so far astray, even if he be at length restored? O brethren, we do not merely want to go to heaven, but we desire to enjoy a heaven on the road to heaven. We would like not only to come up from the wilderness but to come up from the wilderness leaning on our Beloved. We would not wish to be saved "so as by fire," but to have an abundant entrance administered to us into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Asa's character was well known among the people, and they loved and respected him. The mistake he had made grieved many of the godly, I do not doubt; but for all that, they felt that one fault must not blot out the recollection of nearly forty years of devoted service to God; so they loved him and they honored him with a funeral worthy of a king, a funeral by which they expressed both their sorrow and their esteem. But may it never be said of you and of me, "He led a good life; he was eminent in the

service of God, and did much; but there was an unhappy day in which the weakness of the flesh mastered the inner life." O dear sister, if you have brought up your children and have seen your family about you, and they have been proofs to all the world of the way in which you have walked with God, and of your care to discharge your duties, do not let your old age be given up to petulance and murmuring and complaining, so that your friends will have to say of you, "At the last she was not the happy Christian woman that she used to be." My dear brother, you have been a merchant, and you have resisted a good many temptations, and you have been noted for your honorable character, do not now in a moment of extreme trial begin to doubt your God. May the Holy Ghost preserve you from so great an ill. In the time of your need you will find the Lord to be Jehovah-jireh. He is no fair weather friend, but he is a shelter from the storm, a covert from the tempest. Stand fast in your faith in him. Do not question your God, and do questionable things in consequence, for, if you do, it will be said by those who come after you, and perhaps even while you live by those who love you, "He was a good man, but there was a sad period of weakness and inconsistency, and though he was deeply penitent, yet from that unhappy day he went limping to his tomb."

What a precious Christ we have, who saves such sinners as we are at all! What a dear and blessed Lord we have, who does not cast us away, notwithstanding all our slips and falls and shameful wanderings. Beloved, let us not be so base as wantonly to grieve him:—

> "We have no fear that thou shouldst lose
> One whom eternal love could choose;
> But we would ne'er this grace abuse
> Let us not fall. Let us not fall.

With such a warning as this of Asa before us now, do not let us relax our watchfulness and insensibly turn aside. "The

path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." That is your model; that is the promise which Scripture sets before you. Plead it, and try to realize it. Let us go from strength to strength. Let us ask to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If we have wanted props hitherto—outward and visible props—and have not been able altogether to rely upon God, may the Lord help us to grow stronger, so that we may have done with Ready-to-Halt's crutches. May we walk uprightly before the Lord, because we rely upon him, trusting ever in his sure faithfulness, and in the power which guarantees that his promise shall be fulfilled.

I do not know to whom I may be speaking a needful word, except that I know it is needful for myself. Peradventure there are some here to whom it may be just the word that is wanted. Dear brother, the life of faith is a blessed one; a believer's course is a tried one, it is a warfare; but, for all that, all the sorrows of faith put together do not equal in bitterness one drop of the sorrow of sin, or one grain of the misery of unbelief. The king's highway may be rough, but By-path Meadow in the long run is the rougher way of the two. It looks very pleasant to walk on the green turf, but, remember, it is only in appearance that By-path Meadow is smooth. The ways of Christ are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace, as compared with any other paths in the world; and if they were not—if to serve the Lord led us only into sorrow and trouble—I trust the loyal hearts here, the virgin souls whom Christ has chosen, would resolve through floods or flames, if Jesus led the way, to follow still. O beloved, may ye cleave to the Lord by a simple faith! May ye cleave to him when the many turn aside! May ye witness that he has the living Word, and none upon earth beside! Because your hearts are frail and feeble, ask him now to cast the bands of his love

about you, and the cords of a man, to bind you fast to his altar, that you may not go away from it; for except he hold you fast, ye must, ye will decline, and prove apostates after all. But he will hold you; he will keep the feet of his saints. Only trust not in yourselves. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." If any man say, "I stand," let him take heed lest he fall. Beware of that self-confidence, and spiritual boasting, which is becoming common among Christians, aye, and among some of the better sort, who can even brag of their attainments; when, if they did but know themselves, they would confess that they are nothing better, even at the best, than poor, naked, miserable sinners, and have need to look to Jesus, for they are nothing but empty boasters apart from him, since only in Christ are we anything. "When I am weak, then am I strong," but at no other time. When I think I have whereof to glory, then am I indeed despicable; I know not myself, and am become purblind, so as only to see what my own pride makes me think I see. May the Holy Ghost keep us humble—keep us at the cross-foot—keep us flat on the promise, resting on the eternal rock, and crying, "nothing am I, Lord—nothing; but thou art all in all. I am all emptiness; come and fill me. I am all nakedness; come and clothe me. I am all weakness; come and glorify thy power, by making use of me!"

God bless you, dear friends, and if there be any among you who have not a God to trust in, or a Saviour to love, may you seek Jesus now! If you seek him he will be found of you; for whosoever believeth in him is saved, whosoever trusteth in Christ is saved. Pardon and salvation belong to every soul that hangs its hope upon the cross. May God bless you richly, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SERMON VI.

QUESTIONS OF THE DAY AND THE QUESTION OF THE DAY.

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING.

"What think ye of Christ?"—Matthew xxii. 42.

IT was a custom among the Jews before the Paschal lamb was killed to shut it up for several days for examination. It was at first selected with great care, for it must be "a lamb without blemish, a male of the first year"; and lest at the first choice some blemish should have been overlooked it was continually inspected from day to day. It was meet that the lamb of God's passover should pass through a similar ordeal. It is remarkable that our Saviour, during the days which preceded his being offered up for us on Calvary was examined and questioned both by friends and foes. The sharpest eyes were brought to bear upon him—eyes made preternaturally keen through the malice of wicked hearts. He passed under the scrutiny of Pharisees, of Herodians, of Sadducees, and of lawyers. They tested him in all parts, and tried him from all points; yet they found no fault in him. "They marvelled and left him, and went their way"; but like Pilate, they found no fault in him. Read the chapter before us in that light, and it becomes singularly interesting, as exhibiting the unassailable perfection of our Divine Redeemer. Let us pray that when we are proved and tested we may also endure the fiery trial, and be found to be pure gold. As they tried our Master so will they also try us;

may we through his triumphant grace endure even unto the end.

As I looked upon our text in my study, another current of thought passed through my mind. The text stands in a remarkable connection. The chapter which contains it opens with the parable of the wedding feast. The marriage banquet was spread, the guests were invited, they would not come, and therefore special messengers were sent to compel as many as they could find to partake of the feast. Then as if to apprise ministers in all generations, that the greatest hindrances they would ever meet with would arise from the quibbling, captious spirit of mankind, we have in the same chapter a long account of the various cavillers that assailed our Lord. When we preach the gospel, men do not repel us point blank by telling us that there is no importance in our message; but instead thereof they suggest difficulties, propound frivolous inquiries, or fly off at a tangent upon some other less important topic. They evade the pursuit of the gospel by plunging into the mists of debate. Like the cuttle-fish, which escapes by clouding the water all around it, so do they avoid the invitations and declarations of the Word of God, by raising questions of a secondary character. It was so in Christ's day. His adversaries met his arguments with quibbles, or with wranglings. It is certainly so now. We cannot get at men; they stave us off, they parry our home thrusts, and baffle us by hiding behind the shields of evil questioning. We cannot get to push of bayonet with them; they lie entrenched behind the ramparts of disputation. With other questions, they push off the main question, and keep far from them the soul-saving truth. The Lord Jesus Christ here teaches his ministers the art of overleaping the sinner's defences, dashing into the centre of his stronghold, and smiting him with the edge of the sword, by means of the inquiry—"What think ye of Christ?" We should deal with matters of disputation as he did—answer them, as far as they

are to be answered, with wisdom and prudence; but then he would have us carry the war into the enemy's country and attack the human conscience with the demand, "What think ye of Christ?" This morning I purpose first to speak upon *questions of the day,* and then to press home upon you *the question of the day*—the question of all questions, in which life and death are wrapped up.

I. First, a little upon some of the QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, not at all with any intent of interesting you in them, but rather of calling you somewhat away from them lest they too much engross you.

The first question of the day is nearly akin to that which was proposed to our Lord by the Pharisees and the Herodians. It deals with the connection between politics and religion, *the vexatious question of Church and State.* How far does Cæsar's rule go? Where does it end? And where are we amenable to God alone? This inquiry in a very practical shape presses upon the Dissenters of England. I very largely attribute the partial decline of religious prosperity in some of our churches to the interest which has been taken in the questions which naturally arise out of the unscriptural and adulterous connection at present existing between the Church and the State in this land. We have each of us a certain amount of mental power, of time, and of energy, and no more; and if it be a necessity, as it is a necessity, that every Nonconformist should contend for his rights and liberties, and should never rest till perfect religious equality is established in the land, then so much of our strength is taken away from higher and better matters to attend to that which nevertheless it is unavoidable that we should consider. It is not possible for us to cease from our efforts to obtain deliverance from the degrading yoke which now burdens us. We are told that we enjoy *toleration;* the very word is insult. What would the members of the dominant sect think if we talked of tolerating them? We shall never be satisfied

until all religious communities stand upon an equal footing before the law. Cæsar has no right to demand of us that we shall support the religion or the superstition which he chooses to select. An Established Church is a spiritual tyranny. We wear no chains upon our wrists, but on our spirits our oppressors have thrust fetters which gall us worse than bands of steel. We are compelled as a part of the nation to support a church whose business it is to pull down that which with prayers and tears we live to build up, and would even die to maintain. As Protestant Dissenters we see the truths we preach assailed by an army of Anglican Papists whom we are compelled to support that they may oppose our most cherished designs. Popery is this day installed and endowed among us, and we are compelled to acknowledge its myrmidons as the clergy of our own national church. That which our fathers died to overthrow we are compelled to support. We cannot help being indignant; we should be less than men if our blood did not boil within us at such injustice. If men want Popery, or any other form of error, let them pay for it themselves, and call it their own; but to foist their superstition on us as part of the nation is an oppression against which we appeal to the Judge of all the earth. Men cannot long bear to be saddled with the maintenance of a superstition which they abhor; least of all can the descendants of the Ironsides endure it, who, though they have laid aside all carnal weapons, cannot quite forget the fields on which their fathers made the Cavaliers feel the weight of their right arms. The insult to our consciences which is embodied in the present Church and State is a daily provocation to us as men and Christians. Of the present unrighteous domination I would say, Down with it, down with it, all ye who have a spark of justice left in your souls. As for us, we will never rest till we are free from this excuseless injustice, and free we will be, as sure as God, the God of righteousness yet lives.

Now, we cannot think about all this and be earnest about it—we confess it, and are grieved it is so—without very much of our strength running in that direction, strength which we would fain spend upon pure, spiritual religion. We desire to be always and alone preaching Christ; we desire to be building up his church, and living at peace with all our brethren; we want in all things to be giving unto God all our heart and soul and strength; but this altercation concerning God and Cæsar will come in. It imperatively demands our attention, and so it distracts us in a measure from our higher work; and, therefore, the sooner it is done with the better. We cannot be always taken up with this matter, we count the gospel to be worth ten thousand times as much. The Saviour, when the Cæsar question was brought forward, answered it most completely. They said, "Shall we pay tribute to Cæsar?" "Whose money is this?" said he. "Cæsar's money." "Very well; you have evidently submitted to Cæsar's government, you are under his sway; therefore pay to him the tax which he demands of you, but still by no means forget that you are under God's government; therefore render unto God the things that are God's." He drew a line of distinction here which ever ought to be maintained. "To Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." To maintain order, to repress crime, to preserve individual liberty, to protect each man's rights, this is Cæsar's business. To enforce religion? Is Cæsar to do that? God forbid, for what religion will Cæsar teach us? Is he a Pagan? he will teach us idolatry; is he a Papist? he will ordain Popery; is he an atheist? he will establish infidelity. Remember the days of Queen Mary, and see what Cæsar is capable of when he meddles with religion. It is none of Cæsar's business to deal with our consciences, neither will we ever obey Cæsar in any matter which touches conscience. He may make what laws he will about religion, but by our loyalty to God we pour contempt on Cæsar when he usurps the place of

God. He is no more to us than the meanest beggar in the street if he goes beyond his own legitimate authority. To Cæsar, Cæsar's; politics to politicians; obedience, cheerful and prompt, to civil rulers; to God, and to God only, things that are God's; and what are these? Our hearts, our souls, our consciences. Man himself is the coin upon which God has stamped his image and superscription, but alas! both are sadly marred, and we must render up to God our manhood, our wills, our thoughts, our judgments, our minds, our hearts. Consciences are for God. Any law that touches a conscience is null and void *ipso facto,* for the simple reason that kings and parliaments have no right to interfere in the realm of conscience. Conscience is under law to none but God. We do not believe in liberty of conscience towards God. We are bound towards him, to believe what he tells us, and to do what he bids us; but liberty of conscience in respect to all mankind is the natural right of every man of woman born, and it ought to be tenderly respected.

Our Lord here lays the controversy to sleep by telling us to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. Now, if there be any person here who is unconverted, but whose mind is much occupied with the Church and State disputation, whichever side of the question he may take up, I would earnestly say to him,—important as this is, and to some of us it is the question which, next to our soul's salvation, weighs most heavily on our hearts, yet still, first of all, attend to the most serious inquiry—"What think ye of Christ? Is he the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God in your esteem? Are you saved by him? If not, I would bid you waive the topic upon which we have just now spoken, until the higher question is answered. When a man is at the point of death the question is, what can we do to restore him? When the vessel is going down, the one thing needful for every man is "How can I get to the boat?" Sometimes in a desperate

case, as that of sudden shipwreck, the love of life may drive men to do even more than they should do for themselves, and tempt them in their mortal terror to become forgetful of the claims of others. O, I wish that something like that excess of diligence, if such could be, would come upon men's hearts with regard to their souls. There are enough saved men who can fight out the ecclesiastical dispute; you unsaved ones had better go to the cross, and there seek and find salvation. The question has, doubtless, vast importance, but with you the far more important matter is to believe in Christ. Suppose you were to die to-night; it would then be a small matter to you what may be done in the next session of Parliament with the question of the separation of Church and State. If you have to stand before the bar of God before this year is out, the established churches will be of small account to you if you be banished from heaven and hope; therefore, see to it, I pray you, that no business interferes with the business of your soul.

A second problem of the age also crops up in this chapter—the inquiry into the *details of the future state.* I think none of us remember a time in which so many strange theories have been brought forward with regard to the doom of the ungodly, and the condition of the righteous. Some are teaching, and teaching with great vehemence, that believers as well as others die at the time when they depart out of this world, and that there is no more existence for the righteous until the day of the resurrection; that there are no such things as immortal souls, but that even the godly moulder into dust and cease to be until the resurrection raises them out of the grave. Now these are solemn topics, and I believe that it is highly needful to be orthodox upon them. I do not think any man wastes his time who stands up to defend the old faith with regard to these things. I am persuaded that the generally received views are truthful and healthful, and that the novelties which swarm around us

will breed abounding mischief; still for all that, there are other matters to be thought about besides that carnival of errors, which comprises soul-sleeping, annihilation, universal restoration, and the like. There is a prior question, and that is "What think ye of Christ?"

However, since the facts of the future ought to be known, our Saviour dealt with the Sadducees' heresy. The Sadducees believing in pure materialism and denying the resurrection, the Saviour declared to them the certainty of a future state, and took out of their hands a weapon of fancied difficulty. In answer to their question about the woman seven times married, he declared that in the next world men are neither married nor given in marriage; where death's ravages are unknown there is no need of reproduction. Since the Sadducees denied that there were angels, our Lord, without noticing their scepticism, declared that the risen ones are as the angels of God, thus killing two birds with one stone; correcting their views as to what men would be in the other world, and quietly assuming that there are spirits called angels. Then the great Teacher proved beyond question the continuous existence of the saints, by reminding the Sadducees of the voice that spake out of the bush to Moses. The Pentateuch was the great authority of the Sadducees; they did not reject the other inspired books, but they held the writings of Moses in superior veneration; therefore our Lord with wisdom selects from the book of Exodus and quotes the words of the Lord's address to Moses out of the bush, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He then added a well-known Jewish axiom, "God is not the God of the dead but of the living," and routed the sceptics in one battle. It followed clearly enough that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were living in Moses' day. They were in their graves; that was certain; therefore it was equally certain that a something which was truly Abraham, was not in the grave, but was somewhere

else ; that is to say, that the souls of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were living, and living in the possession of God, though their bodies had been consumed by the worm. There was the Saviour's argument. The patriarchs, as to their bodies, had been dead for some generations ; yet God called himself their God, and therefore, in the truest sense, they could not be really dead, but must still exist. It has been said that the nerve of this argument lies i the fact that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were, as to their bodies, dead at the time ; —that is true, and yet the argument would be strong if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been alive at the time. Note this well, and consider the point. When God says to a man, "I am thy God," what an infinite blessing he bestows, and how much the words imply ! As long as God exists he belongs to that man, and, therefore, the man himself must exist as long as God does ; for that which does not exist cannot possess anything. That which possesses anything must itself exist ; hence it follows that as Abraham and all other saints must forever possess God, as their God, according to the word—"I am thy God"—therefore they must eternally exist. In order to receive and experience the sum and substance of the divine promise, nothing less than eternity will suffice. When God bestows a blessing upon a man, he gives him such a range of being as shall give him the capacity for enjoying that blessing. Temporal blessings have attached to them a natural being ; the vast spiritual boon of possessing is infinite, and needs an everlasting existence for its enjoyment. The saints are living still, or else God could not be their God ; and the saints are conscious still, for God is not the God of unconscious things that by hundreds of years together neither think nor feel. He is the God of those who are living in the sense of being active. They still worship, and adore, and love, and serve ; their rest with Jesus is not that of unconsciousness. They are living ; not merely existing, but living unto the living

God. This was our Saviour's proof, and it is one which is overwhelmingly convincing.

The doctrine of the continued existence of the righteous is bound up with that of the resurrection. Immortality and the resurrection are kindred truths. When God said, "I am the God of Abraham," he did not say "I am the God of Abraham's soul;" if he had, the existence of Abraham's soul would have fulfilled the promise; but "I am the God of Abraham," includes the whole of his person, and Abraham was body as well as soul; it was needful, therefore, that Abraham's body should rise to enjoy the fulness of God. There was, as a learned writer observes, an advance all the way. God was the God of Abraham while he was in the body of this death; he was the God of Abraham when unclothed, and he will be the God of Abraham when he is clothed upon with his house which is from heaven.

Now, my dear hearers, I would at once call you back to the main point. These questions ought to be thought of, and you should receive the teaching of Christ about them, and yield to none of the inventions of these evil days; yet is there for you this more pressing question: "What think ye of Christ?" Have you a part and a lot in him? Are you saved by him? It seems to me the merest folly for an unconverted man to be asking, "What is the nature of heaven? What is the form of the resurrection body?" Did you ever see a poor, shivering, miserable beggar in the street, starving for want of food, and yet curious about the exact details of the imperial revenue for the current quarter of the year? What business can that be of his? Is not this his first business, viz., to win a morsel of bread? And should it not be your first concern, as a man, that you should be pardoned, that you should be accepted before God, that you should be saved from hell? Speculations upon the Second Advent, and the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel—what have they to do with you while you are

without Christ? Are ye mad, ye unsaved ones?—will ye gratify curiosity while your souls are perishing for lack of the knowledge of Christ? The wrath of God abideth on you, you are like a man in a condemned cell waiting for the day of execution; is this a time to be puzzling your head about things which concern others, but which as yet certainly do not concern you? "What think ye of Christ?" Put other things aside till that is settled; then you shall attend to them in order, according as God shall help you.

There are, however, other questions which will arise—questions *upon theology*. One of these was asked of our Saviour by the Pharisees. They wanted to know which was the first and chief commandment. They believed that Moses had given them three hundred and sixty-five commandments, corresponding to the number of days in the year, and that he had given them two hundred and forty-eight prohibitions. They made a great point of knowing the exact numbers. Among them there were great disputes as to which entailed the more sin, the breaking of this or the breaking of the other command. Some maintained that the ceremonial ordinances were more important than the moral commands; another party held that the ceremonial precepts were very secondary as compared with the moral law. Scribes and lawyers wrangled without end. Our Saviour answered their question by telling them that the love of God and the love of their neighbor were the two great commandments; and so he ended that matter, but he did not permit their thoughts to stay there. He pushed on to the more vital question, "What think ye of Christ?" At the present day, if you speak to a man about his soul, he will ask you, "Are you an Arminian or a Calvinist?" To this we reply, "Dear fellow, are you saved? that is your matter. We will tell you what we are another time; for the present you need a Saviour, and there ought your mind to settle." "Well," says he, "what is your opinion in

reference to Baptism?" Our answer is ready enough, for we see the Lord's will plainly enough in his word, but we beg you to think more of Jesus than of ordinances. "But," says the caviller, "are you Presbyterian in church polity, or do you favor Episcopacy?" Dear friend, what has that to do with you? Have you passed from death unto life? There is the point. A man is drowning and I put out my arm to rescue him, but he will not grasp my hand till I can assure him that I pronouce a certain Latin word correctly,—is he not an idiot? My dear fellow, right quantities or false quantities are inconsiderable things compared with your being drowned; let us get you on dry land first and then we will talk about long vowels and short ones. So also we cannot afford to split hairs while souls are being lost. We are far from saying that any doctrine is inconsiderable, and that any truth is unimportant,—a grain of truth is worth dying for; still there are solemn facts to be thought of before we come to controversial doctrines. There are persons who will say, "But how would you celebrate the Lord's Supper?" I reply, "We do not celebrate it at all with such as you are. Until you know the Saviour we have no Lord's Supper for you whatever." "But," saith he,—and he begins to question you whether there should be an altar of stone or a table of wood, and whether the elements should be dispensed by a priest or by a minister, or by a common Christian; "These are very weighty matters, and I must have them all solved at once." Dear friends, we also think them weighty, and our testimony about them never hesitates, but we are not going to dispute with you, for we earnestly entreat you first of all to know Christ and him crucified. Make your calling and election sure and then we will be ready to give you reasons from the Word for our faith and practice. At present, "What think ye of Christ?" is the one sole inquiry which demands your care. I think I spoke out plainly enough just now upon the first question referring

to politics and religion, to let you know that I am by no means lukewarm on minor points; and I would speak with equal definiteness here about doctrines and ordinances if it were needful to show you that I do not undervalue them; but for all that, "What think ye of Christ?" is far above all other questions for a man who is unredeemed, and I do beseech you not to let those other points destroy you, as they may do by taking away your thoughts from the one thing needful. Till you are saved you want your mind concentrated on the one essential point. After that we will teach you to observe all things whatsoever the Lord has spoken; but just now, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is the most important text in the Bible for you to consider.

II. Now let us come to the second part of our subject—THE QUESTION OF ALL QUESTIONS, the question of the day, the question of all days until days shall end,—"What think ye of Christ?"

Observe that it is an inquiry *which concerns the Saviour.* "What think ye of the Messias, the Sent One, the Christos, the Anointed One of God?" Do you think his errand was necessary? Was there a need for such a person to come hither? Was a Saviour necessary in your case? He came to save men from their sins; have you any sins? Have you sins from which you cannot escape of yourself, for which you can make no atonement yourself? Have you felt this? Do you feel it now? If you say you have no sin, your thoughts of Christ will be that he was a needless commissioner from heaven as far as your case is concerned. He came not to call those who need not to be saved; why should he do such a work of supererogation? Have you felt sin? Do you confess it? Do you believe therefore that God in sending Christ to save his people from their sins has done a gracious and merciful act? Do you accept the person whom he has sent? Are you willing to be saved by him? Are

you willing to be saved on his terms, which are that you do yield yourself up to him, that he shall be your sole Saviour, that he shall have all the glory of your salvation, that you shall not be saved by any merit of your own, but be pardoned through his blood and righteousness? Do you agree to that? Does your soul say "Ay" to that before the living God? If so, your thoughts of Christ are right; but if not, if you kick at his sacrifice, and say, "I see no need of it;" if you think it insufficient to put away sin, and if, therefore, you do not trust in it; then have you made God a liar by not believing his testimony concerning his Son. But I trust that this morning, your thoughts of Christ are just these: "I am a sinner deserving punishment from God; I see that God has punished sin in Jesus Christ, and I trust myself in Christ the atoning sacrifice, wholly and alone; I give myself up to Christ Jesus that he may save me, that he may rule me, that he may make me holy, even as he is holy. If he will but have me, I will have no opposition to him; nay I feel on the contrary, a complete yielding of my soul to his divine will, happy to be saved by such a Saviour." I am favored indeed to be addressing persons who feel this in their very souls. Whatever else you have to perplex you, beloved, always hold to that, and let your thoughts of our dear Saviour ever be humble, ever sweet, and ever pleasant to your hearts; then shall you be strong for sacred service, but never, never, never cease to think well of Jesus.

Please to notice that this question not only concerns the Saviour, but it concerns *the person of the Saviour*, and this is a point too often forgotten. We speak of the Lord's teachings and doings, but we ought more often to remember that he is a real personage, not a name, or a fiction; not a shadow that has passed across the historic page, but a man of whom we may ask the question—"Whose Son is he?" as the Master asked it here. Now shall I put the question to you? What think you of the person of Christ? Do you

SERMON VIII.

AN OLD-FASHIONED CONVERSION.

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living."—Job xxxiii. 29, 30.*

SOME people are wonderfully enamored of anything that is old. An old coin, an old picture, an old book, or even a piece of antique rubbish, they will almost worship. The jingle of a rusty medal is music to them, and "auld nicknackets" are as precious as diamonds. It is wonderful what a little mouldiness and a few worm-holes will do in the way of increasing values. I confess I do not very greatly share in the feeling, at least it is no craze of mine; but, nevertheless, all things being equal, antiquity has its charms. Old, old stories of the days far past, when time was young, have a special interest; they are as windows which permit us to gaze down the dim aisles of ages long gone by—we look through them with mingled curiosity and awe. I am about this morning to speak to you concerning an old conversion. We shall rehearse an ancient story of the renewal

* The real text is the whole passage from verse fourteen to thirty and the reader is requested to turn to it before reading the sermon.

and salvation of a soul. In our day we meet with professors who cry down everything of the present, and cry up everything of the former days, which they call the good old times. Such persons talk much about old-fashioned conversions and hold in great admiration the lives of believers of the old school. I shall this morning introduce you to an old-fashioned conversion, and explain the way in which men were brought to God not only hundreds, but thousands of years ago. I suppose that Elihu delivered this description of conversion about the time of Moses, or at the period when Israel was in Egypt, for almost general consent appropriates one of those dates to the Book of Job. The record we shall read this morning, and study carefully, refers to the very very oldest times. Let this fact give additional interest to our meditation; and if it does I am sure that we shall not lack for earnest attention, for the subject is of great intrinsic value.

Kindly keep your Bibles open; we have already read the chapter, but it will be needful to refer to it verse by verse.

I. The matter in hand is to compare an old-fashioned conversion with those of the present time, and the first note we shall strike is this: it is quite certain from the description given in this thirty-third chapter of Job that THE SUBJECTS OF CONVERSION WERE SIMILAR, and men in the far gone ages were precisely like men in these times. The passage tells us nothing about the stature of men's bodies, but as far as they are spiritually concerned the photograph which Elihu took is the portrait of many of those who are brought to Jesus now. Reading the passage over, we find that men in those times needed converting; for they were deaf to God's voice (verse 14); they were obstinate in evil purposes (verse 17), and puffed up with pride. They needed chastening to arouse them to thought, and required sore distress to make them cry out for mercy (verse 19–22). They were very loth to say, "I have sinned," and were not at

all inclined to prayer. Nothing but sharp discipline could bring them to their senses, and even then they needed to be born again. Men in those days were sinful and yet proud; sinful self and righteous self were both in power; it was one part of conversion to withdraw them from their purposes of sin, and another part of their conversion to "hide pride" from them. Though they were sinful they thought that they were righteous, and though they were condemned by the law of God they still entertained the fond hope that they should by their own merits obtain the favor of the Most High. They were then, as they are now, poor as poverty, and yet proud of their wealth, Publicans in sin, and yet Pharisees in boasting.

It appears that in those days God was accustomed to speak to men and to be disregarded by them; we are told that God spake "once, yea twice," and men perceived him not. Their presumptuous slumbers were too deep to be broken by the call of love. Samuel said, "Here am I, for thou didst call me," but they slept on in defiance of the Lord. O, how frequently doth the Lord speak now to deaf ears! He calls, and men refuse, he stretches out his hands, and men do not regard him; but they are desperately set upon their sins, and sodden in carnal security, therefore they do despite to his grace, and ruin their own souls.

In those ancient times when a man was converted, the Lord himself must needs turn him, omnipotence itself was necessary to divide man from his folly. God's speaking to the ear was not enough unless he followed it up with a powerful application to the heart. Man was too far gone to be healed by remedies less than divine—he was utterly past hope unless Almighty love would come to the rescue; verily the case is the same at this day, and each man repeats his fellow. As the fish still bites at the bait, as the bird still flies into the snare, as the beast is still taken in the pit, so is man still the dupe of his sins, and only the Lord can save

him. Salvation was only wrought by the gracious influences of God's Spirit in the days of Job, and it is only so accomplished at this present hour. Men were lost then as now; men thought they were not lost then, and they are equally conceited now. Into the house of the divine Physician the same class of persons enter as were welcomed and healed by him ages ago; he has the same blind eyes and deaf ears to open, hearts still require to be transformed from stone to flesh, and leprosies to be exchanged for health by his Sovereign touch. The Spirit from the four winds breathed on a valley covered with dry bones in the days of the fathers, and he comes forth still to work upon the like scene of death. Man has not outgrown his sins. As it was in the beginning it is now, and so it ever will be while that which is born of the flesh is flesh; as were the sires such are their sons, and such will our sons be in their turn; so that the process of conversion needs to be the same, and "all these things God worketh oftentimes with man."

II. The second note we shall strike is this, that in those olden times THE WORKER OF CONVERSION WAS THE SAME,—"*all these things God worketh.*" The whole process is by Elihu ascribed to God, and every Christian can bear witness that the Lord is the great worker now; he turns us, and we are turned. We read in verse fourteen, that at first the Lord wrought upon men by speaking to them, once, yea, twice; he also brought truth home to their minds and instructed them; and so changed their purposes and humbled their hearts. In the same manner the Lord worketh now. Conversion is a change which concerns the mind, the affections, the spirit; it is not a physical manipulation as some foolish persons fancy, who appear to think that God converts men by force, and turns them over as a man would roll a stone. The Lord operates upon men as men, not as blocks of wood; God speaks to them, instructs them, reveals truth to them, encourages them to hope, and gra-

ciously influences them for good. Man is left free, for "God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not," and yet in God's own wise and suitable manner, he is at length led to cry, "I have sinned and perverted that which is right, and it profited me not."

But in those times, as now, it was necessary that God should do more than speak to the outer ear, he therefore came nearer still, and by his Holy Spirit led men really to hear what he spake. He did not leave men to their wills, neither did he trust their conversion to the eloquence of preachers, or to the cogency of arguments, but he himself came and opened men's ears, and pressed the truth home upon their understandings, and made it operative upon their entire nature. Man was so proud that no one else could humble him but God; and he was so wilful, that no one could withdraw him from his purpose but the Lord alone; but the Lord in condescension did the deed, and made the man obedient and humble. Indeed, the Lord is described in this chapter as the main cause of all the work accomplished. Whereas, a ransom was needed to deliver men from going down to the pit, it is the Lord's voice which cried, "I have found a ransom." Whereas, even when the ransom was found, men did not know it, and would not receive it; it was God who sent a messenger, one of a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, and to proclaim the great provision made for restoring man to his primeval state. It is the Lord who delivers the soul from the pit, that man's life may see the light. In this chapter it is God that visits, that speaks, chastens, instructs, enlightens, consoles, renews and saves, from first to last. God worketh all in all. Salvation is of the Lord, it is not of man, neither by man; neither is it of the will of man, nor of the flesh, nor of the blood, nor of birth, but of the will of God. The purpose of God and the power of God work salvation from first to last. What a blessing this is for us, for, if salvation were of ourselves, who among us would be saved?

But he hath "laid help upon one that is mighty;" God also is our strength and our song, for he himself has become our salvation. He who has begun the good work will carry it on. Christ is the Alpha, and Christ is the Omega, the "author and the finisher of our faith." So we have two points in this ancient conversion in which it was just like our own, the same men to be operated upon, and the same God to work the miracles of grace.

III. The most interesting point to you will probably be the third: THE MEANS USED TO WORK CONVERSION IN THOSE DISTANT AGES WERE VERY MUCH THE SAME AS THOSE EMPLOYED NOW. There were differences in outward agencies, but the inward *modus operandi* was the same. There was a difference in the instruments, but the way of working was the same. Kindly turn to the chapter, at the fifteenth verse; you find there that God first of all spoke to men, but they regarded him not, and then he spoke to them effectually by means of a dream: "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed." Now, this was an extraordinary means of grace, seldom used now. In this the distant ages differ from the present. A dream, though it be in itself but the phantasm of sleep, may be employed by God to arouse the mind towards eternal things. Dreams of death and judgment to come have frequently had a very alarming effect upon the conscience, while visions of celestial glory have impressed the heart with desires after infinite bliss. As Dryden says of some men—

> "In sleep they fearful precipices tread;
> Or shipwreck'd, labor to some distant shore,"

so others have in their slumbers shivered at the gates of hell, or even been tossed upon its fiery waves, and thoughts consequent upon such dreams have, by God's grace, occasionally been rendered permanently useful, though I fear it is not

often so. In the days of Elihu, however, dreams were much more frequently the way in which God spake, for there were few messengers from God to interpret his mind, no openly declared gospel, and few assemblies for instruction by hearing the word; and what is more, there was then no written word of God. In those early times they had no inspired books at all, so that, lacking the Bible, and lacking the frequent ministrations of God's servants, the Lord was pleased to supply their deficiencies by speaking to men in the visions of the night. I say again, we must not expect the Lord to return to the general use of so feeble an agency now that he employs others which are far more effectual. It is much more profitable for you to have the word in your houses which you can read at all times, and to have God's ministers to proclaim clearly the gospel of Jesus, than it would be to be dependent upon visions of the night.

The means, therefore, outwardly may have changed, but still, whether it be by the dream at night, or by the sermon on the Sabbath, the power is just the same: namely, in the word of God, God speaks to men in dreams, if so, he speaks to them all nothing more and nothing different from what he speaks in the written word. If any come to you and say, "I have dreamed this or that," and it be not in the Scriptures, away with their dreams! If anything should occur in your own mind in vision which is not already revealed in the Book of God, put it away, it is an idle fancy not to be regarded. Woe to that man whose religion is the baseless fabric of dreams, he will one day wake up to find that nothing short of realities could save him. We have the more sure word of testimony, unto which we do well if we take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. Conversions, then, in the old times, used to be by the word of God; it came in a different way, but it was the same word and the same truth. At this time faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, and at bottom that was precisely

the way in which faith came to men in those distant periods.

Now, observe, that in addition to the external coming of the word, it seems from the chapter before us in the sixteenth verse, that men were converted by having their ears opened by God. Alas, men's ears are still stopped up! An old Puritan has mentioned seven forms of what he calls "ear stoppers," which need to be taken out of the human ear. They are frequently blocked up by ignorance; they know not the importance and value of the truth, and, therefore, they refuse to give earnest heed to it; judging it to be an idle tale, they go their way to their farms and to their merchandise. Some ears are stopped up by unbelief; they have heard the glad tidings of salvation, but they have not received it as an infallible revelation from heaven, a message backed by divine authority. Scepticism and philosophy, falsely so called, barricade Eargate against the assaults of Emmanuel's captains, so that even the great battering-rams of the gospel prove powerless to force an entrance. "He could not do many mighty works then because of their unbelief!" Other's ears are stopped up by impenitence; the hardness of the heart causes a deadness of the ear. You may discharge the great cannons of the law in the ears of some men, but they will not stir; the thunders of God startle the wild beasts of the wood, but impenitence is not moved thereby. The gospel itself soundeth upon such ears with no more effect than upon a marble statue; the groans of Calvary are nothing to them. Some ears are stopped by prejudice; they have made up their minds as to what the gospel ought to be, and they will not hear it as it is; they have set up for themselves a standard of what the truth should be, and that standard is a false one, for they have put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness. Prejudice against the preacher, or against the denomination are but forms of the same evil:

they make men to be as Ulysses was when his ears were sealed with wax, for they are even as deaf men. The entrance into many ears is also effectually barred by the love of sin. He who loves vice will not hear of repentance; the lover of pleasure detests holy mourning; the licentious think holiness to be another name for slavery. The man who finds delight in sin is a deaf adder whom the wise charmer cannot charm; the poison of asps is under his tongue, and he cannot renounce his deadly hate of a gospel which rebukes his evil ways. It would be vain to teach cleanliness to the sow which wallows in the mire—it loves uncleanliness, and after uncleanliness will it go. Some ears are stopped through pride; the plain, unflattering, humbling gospel of the sinner's Saviour is not to their taste. The gospel for lost sinners, they think, is not addressed to them, for they are almost good enough, and are by no means worthy of any great blame, or in danger of any great punishment. When they acknowledge their sinnership in words they feel it not in their hearts, therefore they hear not the truth in the love of it. If the gospel-pipe could be tuned to notes of flattery, to praise the dignity of man, they would attend to its music, but a gospel for vulgar sinners! How can their noble souls endure it? With their fine feathers all ruffled in disdain, they turn away in a rage. Alas! how many ears are stopped through worldliness. If you stand in a street where traffic is abundant—where the constant thunder of rumbling wheels creates a din—it would be difficult to preach so as to command an audience, for the abundant sound would prevent all hearing; and, to a great extent, the mass of mankind are just in that position as to the joyful sound of the gospel; the rumbling of the wheels of commerce, the noise of trade and the cries of competition, the whirl of cares and the riot of pleasures—all these drown the persuasive voice of heavenly love, so that men hear no more of it than they would hear a pin fall in the midst of a hurricane at sea. Only when God

unstops the ear is the still small voice of truth heard in the chambers of the heart.

Now it is clear to every thoughtful person that all these ear-stoppers existed in the olden times as well as now, and therefore the same work of opening the passage to the heart was necessarily performed. Dreams did not convert sinners of the patriarchal age, however vivid they might be, nor did prophetic warnings by themselves arouse them,—the hand of him who created the ear was needed to cleanse and circumcise it, ere the truth could find admission.

Note the next sentence, he "sealeth their instruction." That was the means of conversion in the olden times. God brought the truth down upon the soul as you press a seal upon the wax; you bear upon the seal to make the impress, and even thus the power of God pressed home the word. Truth is heard by men, but they forget it unless the Holy Spirit takes the truth and puts it home, and lays his force upon it, and then it makes a stamp upon the conscience, upon the memory, and upon the entire manhood. Perhaps, also, by sealing here is meant confirming. A thing is sealed when it is established by testimony and witness: under hand and seal as we say. Now the Holy Spirit has a way of making truth to become manifest to men, and cogent upon their minds by bearing his witness with it; so that they cannot help feeling that it is true. He sets it in such a light, that they cannot dispute it, but yield full consent to it, their conscience being overwhelmingly convinced.

Dear friends, I pray God the Holy Spirit to seal home the word we speak to each one of you, that from hearers you may grow into believers. I know you will remain hearers only unless that sacred sealing shall take place; but let that come upon you and your soul will bear the gospel stamped into its very texture, never more to be effaced. If the Spirit of God thus seals you, you will be sealed indeed.

By sealing is also sometimes meant preserving and setting

apart, as we seal up documents or treasures of great value, that they may be secure. In this sense the gospel needs sealing up in our hearts. We forget what we hear till God the Holy Ghost seals it in the soul, and then it is pondered and treasured up in the heart: it becomes to us a goodly pearl, a divine secret, a peculiar heritage. This sealing is a main point in conversion. What thousands of sermons many of you have heard, but the instruction has never been sealed to you, and, therefore, you remain unsaved. I cannot bear to think of your unhappy case, and I beseech those who love the Lord to pray that our discourses, or the sermons of some one else, or the Bible itself, may be sealed of the Lord upon these my unhappy hearers, that they may be converted and saved. O for the Lord's sealing hand upon men's hearts! Send, Lord, by whomsoever thou wilt send, and by thy servant also. Give the hearing ear, and then engrave thy gospel upon an understanding heart. Thou art able to do this, and in faith we seek it at thy hands, O Lord God of our salvation. In this manner men were converted in the olden times; ears were opened and hearts were sealed.

It appears, also, that the Lord, in those days, employed providence as a help towards conversion—and that providence was often of a very gentle kind, for it preserved men from death. Read the eighteenth verse:—"He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword." Many a man has had the current of his life entirely changed by an escape from imminent peril; solemn thoughts have taken possession of his formerly careless mind, and he has said to himself, "Has God preserved me from this danger, then let me be grateful to him. He must have had a purpose in my preservation, let me find out what it is, and thankfully endeavor to answer to it." Have any of you, my hearers, escaped from shipwreck? Is there one here who has escaped from accident upon the iron way? Are

you one of a handful who were snatched from between the very jaws of death? Have you risen up from a fever which laid you very low? Are you now almost the only survivor of a family, all the members of which, except yourself, have been taken away by consumption, or some other hereditary disease? Are you a remarkable monument of sparing mercy? Then, I pray you, let the long-suffering of God lead you to repentance, for it has led many before you, and it is intended that it should do the like for you. Yield to the gentle pressure of loving kindness, even as the flowers yield their perfumes to the sunshine: do not need to be crushed and bruised like Oriental spice beneath the pestle. Tenderly doth the Lord call you to himself, and say, "I have spared thee from the grave, I have also kept thy guilty soul from going down to hell, I have placed thee to-day under the sound of the gospel; I am, by my servant, calling upon thee to turn unto me and live. Wilt thou not hear me? Thou art still on praying ground and pleading terms with me—wilt thou not consider all this?" Thus God speaketh now by actions, which speak more loudly than words, and it seems that in the same way he was wont to speak to men in the days gone by, so that providential circumstances were often the means of conversion.

But, further, it seems that, as Elihu puts it, sickness was a yet more effectual awakener in the common run of cases. Observe the nineteenth verse, "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain; so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat." Severe pain destroyed appetite and brought on extreme lassitude and distaste of life; but all this was sent in mercy to fetch the wanderer home. Yes, men get space for thought when they are shut up in the chamber of sickness. While the mill-wheel went on and on and on, they could not hear God speak, but when its hum is hushed the warning voice sounds forth clearly. There in silence the

patient tosses on the bed, wakeful at night, and fearful by day, and then conscience lifts up its clamor and will be heard; then, too, the spirit of God seizes an opportunity to speak to an awakened conscience, and he convinces the man of sin. How much some of us owe to a bed of sickness! I do not desire for any unconverted person here that he should be ill, but if that should be the way to make him think, repent, and believe, I could earnestly pray for it. I believe the Lord has often preached to men in hospitals who never heard him in churches and chapels; fever and cholera have been heard by those whom ministers could not reach. If we could banish pain and sickness from the world, it may be we should be robbing righteousness of two of her most impressive evangelists. What Jonah was to Nineveh, sickness has been to many a man. Like Elijah also, it has cried in the soul, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Disease has been a grim orator for God, and with an eloquence not to be resisted, it has made the hearts of men to bow before its message. If there are any here who have lately been thus afflicted, I would ask them whether God has blessed it to their souls. I earnestly pray that they may not be hardened by it, for in that case there is fear that God will say, "Why should ye be smitten any more, ye will revolt more and more!" and he may add, "I will let them alone, they are given unto idols. I have smitten them till their whole head is sick, and their whole heart is faint. I have made them to be so near death's door, that from the crown of the head even to the foot they are all wounds and bruises through the chastenings of my rod. I will give them up, and no more will I deal with them in a way of grace." Great God, have pity still, and make thy chastisements effectual to their souls. Now, note well that we do not assert that all persons who are saved are awakened by sickness; far from it, all that we are now taught is that many are so aroused, and that was the case in the instance described by Elihu.

In addition to this sickness, the person whom God saved was even brought to be apprehensive of death—"Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers." When a man is made to lie upon his bed on the brink of hell and look into another world, that sight may be sacredly blessed to him. O, it is no small thing to peer into eternity, and to make out, amid the horrid gloom, no shapes of hope but ghastly forms of hideous woe. To have behind one the memory of a mis-spent life, to have above one an angry God, to have within one the aches of the body and the pangs of remorse, and to have beneath one the bottomless pit yawning with its lurid fires! What can be worse? This side of hell, what can be worse than a tortured conscience? This has sometimes made men wake up from a life-slumber and compelled them to cry, "What must we do to be saved?" I could wish that every man here who has remained unmoved by gentle means, might have some such experience. It were better for you to be saved so, as by fire, than not to be saved at all.

But, now, notice that all this did not lead the person into comfort; although he was impressed by the dream and sickness, and so on, yet the ministry of some God-sent ambassador was wanted. "If there be a messenger with him," that is a man sent of God—"an interpreter," one who can open up obscure things and translate God's mind into man's language—"one among a thousand," for a true preacher, expert in dealing with souls is a rare person "to show unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious unto him." God could save souls without ministers, but he does not often do it; he could bring men to Jesus without the call from the lip of his sent servants, but as a general rule conversion in the olden times needed the messenger and the interpreter, and it needs them still: "How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach un-

less they be sent." I pray that many of you, dear brethren, who know the Lord, may become preachers to others; that you may be such successful messengers of mercy to poor broken hearts, that you may be to them picked and choice men like one out of a thousand. I entreat you to pray for me also, that I may have a share, and a large share, in this blessed employment, and that to many God may say through me, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom."

IV. Fourthly, and with too much brevity, THE OBJECTS AIMED AT IN THE OLD CONVERSIONS WERE JUST THE SAME as those that are aimed at now-a-days. Will you kindly look at the seventeenth verse. The first thing that God had to do with the man was to withdraw from him his purpose. He finds him set upon sin, upon rebellion, upon carnal pleasure, upon everything that is selfish and worldly; and conversion turns him away from such evil purpose; it was so then, it is so now. This turning of an obstinate will towards God and holiness is, however, no easy matter; to stay the sun in his course, or reverse the marches of the moon would not be a harder task.

The next object of the divine work was to hide pride from man, for man will stick to self-righteousness as long as he can. Never does limpet adhere to its rock more firmly than a sinner to his own merits, although indeed he has none. Like the old Greek hero in the mythology, the natural man sits down on the stone of self-esteem, and Hercules himself cannot tear him from it. When he is even in outward character vile, he still fancies that there is some good thing in him, and to that fancy he will tenaciously cling; so that it is a work of divine power, an effort of the august omnipotence of heaven, to get a man away from his innate and desperate pride.

Beloved, another great object of conversion is to lead man to a confession of his sin. Hence we find it said in the

twenty-seventh verse, "He looketh upon man, and if any say I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his soul from going into the pit." Man hates confession to his God, I mean humble, personal, hearty confession. He will go to a priest and answer all his filthy questions, but he will not confess to the Lord. He will gabble over words which he calls a "general confession," but true, heart-felt confession he shrinks from—he will not come to the publican's cry if he can help it. He will not say frankly from his heart, "I have sinned." He will not own or confess the perverseness of his nature and say, "I have perverted that which is right;" nor can you get him to own the folly and stupidity of his sin, so as to say, "it profited me not." But conversion brings him to his knees, conversion pulls up the sluices of his soul, and makes him pour out his confessions before the Most High; and when this is done, then salvation has come to the man's soul, for God desires man to put himself into the place of condemnation in order that he may be able to say to him, "I forgive thee freely." The Lord shuts us up to hopelessness and helplessness in order that he may come, as a God of grace, and display his abounding mercy. All our hope lies in him, and all other hopes are delusions. The great work in conversion is not to make people better, so that they may come to God on a good footing, it is to strip them completely and lay them low, so that God may come to them when they are on a bad footing, or rather on no footing at all, but down in the dust at his feet. The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost, but it wants God himself to convince men that they are lost; and the Spirit's work of soul-humbling is just this,—to get man to feel so diseased that he will accept the physician; to get him to feel so poor that he will accept the charity of heaven; to get him to know that he is so stripped, that he will no longer be proud of his fig leaves, but will be willing to take the robe

of righteousness which Christ has wrought out. Conviction is sent to kill the man, to break him in pieces, to bury him, to let him know his own corruption; and all this as a preliminary to his quickening and restoration. We must see the bones in the valley to be dead and dry, or we shall not hear the voice out of the excellent glory, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, 'Ye dry bones live!'" May God in his mercy teach us what all this means; and may we all experience an old-fashioned conversion.

V. Fifthly, the process of conversion in days of yore exactly resembles that which is wrought in us now as to ITS SHADES. The shadowy side wore the same sombre hues as now. First of all, the man refused to hear; God spake once, yea twice, and man regarded him not; here was obstinate rebellion. His heart was as an adamant stone. How true is that to-day! Then came the chastenings till the man's bones were made to ache, and he was full of misery. It is often the same now. I acknowledge I was brought to God by agony of soul. I have often said from this pulpit that no man ever steers his barque towards the port of peace till he is driven there by stress of weather. We never come to Christ till we feel we cannot do without him. We must feel our poverty before we shall ever come and beg at the door of his mercy for help. The shades are the same, for the same imminence of danger which Elihu spoke of comes upon every sinner's consciousness, more or less before he resorts to Jesus for refuge. The same bitter sense of sin comes over men still, and the same wonder at their own folly in having continued in it. The same darkness still covers the sinner's pathway, and the same inability to procure the light for himself; the same need of light from above, the same need of help from him who is mighty to save. If any of you are passing just now through great darkness of soul, because you have not yet come to the light, but God is revealing yourselves to yourselves, be comforted,

for the same dark road has been traversed by many of the saints before you, and it is a safe pathway, leading to comfort in Jesus Christ.

VI. But now, sixthly and very briefly, again, THE LIGHTS ARE THE SAME, even as the shades were the same. You will note in Elihu's description, that the great source of the light was this:—"Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." There is not a gleam of light in the case till you come to that divine word,—and is it not so now? Did you ever get any comfort for your troubled souls till you were led to see the ransom found by God in Jesus Christ? Did you ever know the value of the ransom for yourselves till God spoke it home to you—"Deliver *him* from going down to the pit, for *I* have found a ransom!" This is the central point of the sinner's hope—a bleeding Saviour paying our ransom price in drops of blood, the dying Son of God achieving our redemption by his own death. Oh, dear souls, who are in the dark, if you want light, there is light nowhere but at the cross. Do not look within for light; the only benefit of looking within is to be more and more convinced that all is as dark as midnight apart from Jesus. Look within if you want to despair, but if you wish for hope look yonder to Calvary's mountain, where the Son of God lays down his life that sinners may not die. Hear you from heaven the voice which saith, "I have found a ransom." That is the only reason why God delivers you, not because he has seen any good thing in you, but because he has found a ransom in you. Look where God looks, and your comfort will begin.

Then this precious gospel being announced to the sinner, the comfort of it enters his soul in the exercise of prayer:—"He shall pray unto God, and he will be favorable unto him." O you can pray when you get to the cross; our prayers before we saw Christ, are poor poor things, but when we get to Calvary, and see the utmost ransom paid, and the

full atonement made, then prayer becomes the utterance of a child to a father, and we feel quite sure it will speed.

Next, it appears, that the soul obtains comfort because God gave it his righteousness—"for he will render unto man his righteousness." That righteousness which God expected God bestows; that righteousness which man ought to have wrought out but could not, Christ works out; and God treats the believing man as if he were righteous, making him righteous in the righteousness of Christ. Here is another source of joy.

And then the man being led to a full confession of his sin in the twenty-seventh verse, the last cloud upon his spirit is blown away and he is at perfect peace. God was gracious to the man described by Elihu. God himself became his light and his salvation, and he came forth into joy and liberty. There is nothing more full of freshness and surprise than the joy of a new convert. Though thousands have felt it, yet each one as he feels it is himself amazed. I did really think when God forgave me that I was the most extraordinary instance of his Sovereign love that ever lived, and that I should be bound even in heaven itself to tell to others how God's infinite mercy had pardoned in my case the biggest sinner that ever was forgiven. Now, every saved soul is led to feel just that, and to exult and rejoice, and magnify the Lord with extreme surprise, because of his goodness. It seems it was so in Job's day, and it is so now; the old conversions are the conversions of the period: the shades are the same and the lights are the same.

VII. And last of all, which is the seventh point, THE RESULTS ARE THE SAME, for I think I hardly know a better description of the result of regeneration than that which is given in the twenty-fifth verse: "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth." He who was an old wrinkled man in sin, and looked yet older through his sorrow, becomes born again, starts upon a new

career with a new life within him; the health which had departed from his soul comes back, the spring of spiritual juvenility wells up in him, because God has begotten him afresh and made him a new creature: "Old things have passed away, behold all things are become new!"

And with this change comes back joy. See the twenty-sixth verse: "He shall see his face with joy; for he will render unto man his righteousness;" and the thirtieth verse: "To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." So that the new spirit finds itself in a new world, in which it goeth forth with joy and is led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills break forth before it into singing, and all the trees of the wood do clap their hands. It was so then; it is just the same now. O that the same blessed thing may happen to many here present at this time!

I have endeavored to give a description of conversion, that you may see what it is to be renewed in heart, but I shall have failed of my intention unless many a knee shall be bent to God with this prayer, "O Spirit of God, renew my nature, change my heart: make my flesh to be fresher than a child's, make me a new creature in Christ Jesus." Time is passing: we are getting now almost one-fourth through another year, and the year itself will soon fly away. I would speak to careless and thoughtless ones again, and ask them will it never be time to think upon these things? Will it never be time to consider your ways? Will it never be time to seek unto the Lord? Ye know not how near ye are to the grave's brink. Do consider, I beseech you, and remember that the Lord waiteth to be gracious, that he delighteth in mercy, and if you seek him he will be found of you; and this great conversion and regeneration, of which we have spoken at such length, shall be yours, and you shall see the face of God with joy even as they did of old. The Lord grant it to you for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SERMON IX.

HARVEST MEN WANTED.

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send faithful laborers into his harvest. And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease."—Matthew ix. 37, 38; x. 1.

THE circumstances under which our Lord uttered these words are instructive. He saw the people thronging him whenever he stood up to preach, and he perceived that the regular instructors of the people, those who thought that they were commissioned to teach the nation, were many of them leading them into error, and the rest were either shamefully neglecting their duty, or were performing it without heart, zeal, or even sincerity. The poor people fainted, and were scattered abroad like sheep without a shepherd, harassed by divers fears and cast down by many anxieties. I do not think that the circumstances under which our Lord spake these words have passed away, but rather that we are living under precisely the same conditions. I would not willingly be guilty of uncharitableness, and I bless God that there are many left in our land who are

preaching the gospel in all its purity, and with great earnestness ; but still it is lamentably true that those who profess to be the only authorized teachers are, a very great number of them, leading the people into spiritual bondage by reviving the old popish and pagan rites ; and those who do preach a measure of truth, too often do not preach it boldly nor simply as they should, neither is there enough of life and earnest concern for the souls of men among them. How many even of our own churches, where we think the truth is held, have their pulpits so ill-occupied that they might almost as well be empty as filled as they are, for there is a manifest want of zeal, love, and spiritual power, while the clear testimony concerning Jesus is sadly lacking. At this time the people of many towns and villages are shepherdless sheep, for whose souls no man careth ; they are fainting and ready to die, and no man layeth it to heart. If the circumstances be the same, and he would be a bold man who should dare to dispute it, then the text urgently demands our prayerful attention.

Our Saviour looked upon the people among whom he moved in a manner worthy of our imitation. He was a man of great feeling, he was "moved with compassion," as the Greek word has it ; "his bowels yearned," his sympathies were awakened ; he could not look upon a mass of men with an indifferent countenance, his inmost soul was stirred ; but at the same time he was no mere enthusiast, he was as calmly practical as if he had been a cool calculator. If he sighed, he did something more than sigh ; he proceeded to aid those he pitied. He had practical compassion on the crowd, and, therefore, he turned to his disciples and said, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." He did not go about among the masses with an undiscerning admiration of them ; I do not hear him praising them as "the finest peasantry," or "the sinew of the nation," as some will do ; but neither do we see in him any

trace of aversion to them, as though he felt out of place in their society. He was often saddened by their follies, and grieved by their sins, but he never loathed them or spoke contemptuously of them. The common people heard him gladly, because they saw that he had sympathy with them. Though in character grandly aristocratic, he was in manner and life profoundly democratic; he was a King, and yet "one chosen out of the people," who loved them with all his heart. It is clear also that he never grew discouraged in laboring for their good; you never hear him say that it is useless to preach to the multitude, that they are too degraded, too priest-ridden, or too ignorant. No discouragement ever damped his ardor; he persevered till his work was done. A brave, glorious heart was that of Jesus, always melted to tenderness, but, at the same time, always practical; never influenced either by admiration, or aversion, or discouragement, so as to cease from practical methods of bettering the condition of the people among whom he dwelt. Take note, therefore, that we are about to speak upon a practical matter, and I trust it may become so this morning, that many may be influenced to pray according to the bidding of their Lord, and that the sincerity of their prayers may be proved by their subsequent endeavors to obtain their petitions.

At the outset, this morning, we shall see how *our Lord states the case*,—"The harvest is plenteous;" secondly, that *he indicates the service needed*—more "laborers" were required to gather in the harvest; thirdly, that *he directs us how to obtain the supply of laborers*,—by prayer; and fourthly, *he answers their prayers in a remarkable manner*.

I. First, our Lord STATES THE CASE of men of his time and ours. The people who gathered around him he likens to harvest fields: wherein lay the similarity?

First, he thought of the great multitudes. The thought of *multitudes* rises naturally from the sight of a harvest field,

and when the crop is plenteous the idea of multitude forces itself upon you at once. You cannot count the ears of corn, neither will you be able to count the sons of men. I suppose our Saviour alluded first of all to the crowds around himself, but his mind being much more capacious than ours, he remembered all the thousands of Israel; nay, methinks he could not have restricted his heart to the little country of Israel, he glanced across the seas and beyond the mountains to the myriads of mankind swarming upon this globe. Brethren, it crushes one to think of the millions of our species. Nobody yet has been able to obtain an idea of the vast extent of this one city of London; you shall traverse it from end to end as long as you will, and you shall study its statistics, but you have no conception what the population of London is, and you never will have,—the mass is too great. But what is London compared with our nation, and with the millions that speak our mother tongue all over the world? Yet even these are but a small portion of the innumerable host. We never shall be able to obtain even a fringe of a conception of China with its teeming millions, or of that other populous nation which owns our sceptre, Hindostan. Multitudes are in the valley of existence; as the drops from the rain cloud and as the leaves upon the forest trees; such are the sons of men. You might as well tell the stars in the heavens or the waves of the sea as hope to reckon the myriads which have sprung from the loins of Adam. All these must be reaped and gathered into the gospel garner, or they must perish; all these must have laborers sent of God to gather them in, or they will miss a blissful immortality. Well did our Saviour compare the myriads of the sons of men with the multitude of the ears of corn in the harvest field.

Our Lord intended to set forth a second idea, which dwelt, perhaps, still more prominently in his mind, and it was that of *value*. He did not speak of blades of grass, mark you, in his comparison, but of ears of corn; he did not

talk of tares as he did in other parables; he did not speak of loose pebbles by the sea coast, or worthless grains of sand; but he compared the multitude to wheat, and what is there more precious than corn? Is it not to us most valuable, because it is the sustenance of our life? Do we not for this cause gather it in with shoutings? Harvest-home is always gladsome, because we prize its sheaves. Much toil and care have been spent to secure the production of the harvest, and when the yellow fields wave before our eyes we cannot despise them; we know that they are more precious than anything else that cometh up out of the earth. So it is to God, and to Jesus, God's Son. He did not look upon men of any sort as things to be despised; he would not have the least among them treated as chattels nor regarded with contempt. He knew the wisdom which was displayed in the creation of the fabric of their bodies and in the faculties of their souls. He knew how God takes delight in men, and how good men, sanctified men, give to God's heart a joy like the joy of harvest, and how men who have gone astray, when they are restored, make the great Father's heart to leap within him with a joy which angels cannot give. Of all creatures under heaven, the most precious thing to God is man. He cares nothing for gems of the mine or pearls of the sea, but men he values so much that he gave his only-begotten Son to bleed and die that they might not perish, but have everlasting life. The souls of the multitude are precious in the sight of the Lord, even as corn is precious to the husbandman.

But when the Lord spake of them as a harvest, he had before his mind the idea of *danger* to them. The harvest in our own country is just now ripe and ready for the sickle; but suppose the owner of some large estate should walk through his broad acres and should say, "I have a great harvest—look at those far-reaching fields: but the country has become depopulated, the people have emigrated, and I have no laborers. There are one or two yonder, they are reaping with all

their might, they make long days, and they toil till they faint; but over yonder there are vast ranges of my farm unreaped, and I have not a sickle to thrust in. The corn is being wasted, and it grieves me sorely. See how the birds are gathering in troops to prey upon the precious ears! Meanwhile the season is far advanced, the autumn damps are already upon us, and the chill, frosty nights which are winter's vanguard are on their way. Mildew is spoiling the grain, and what remains sound will shell out upon the ground, or swell with the moisture and become of no service." Behold in this picture the Redeemer. He looks upon the world to-day, and he says within himself, "All these multitudes of precious souls will be lost, for there are so few reapers to gather them in. Here and there are men who, with prodigious energy, are reaping all they can, and all but fainting as they reap, and I am with them, and blessed sheaves are taken home, but what are these among so many?" Look, brethren, can your eye see it? Can even an eagle's wing fly over the vast fields, unreaped plains, without growing weary in the flight? There are the precious ears, they decay, they rot, they perish, they are ruined, to the loss of God and to their own eternal injury; and it grieves the Great Husbandman that it should be so. That is still the case to-day, and it ought to grieve us that it should be so, for his sake, and for the sake of our fellow men. A multitude of precious souls are perishing, and this the Saviour lamented.

The Saviour had yet another thought, namely, that the masses were *accessible*, for he used the same expression when the people came streaming out of Samaria to the well to hear him, drawn out by curiosity created by the woman's story. He said to his disciples, "Lift up now your eyes, behold the fields are white already to the harvest." Now, when people are ready to hear the word, then it is that the fields are ripe; and our Lord meant that as the wheat ears do not oppose the

sickle, stand there, and a man has but to enter into the field, and the result will surely follow, so there are times when nothing is wanted but to preach the gospel, and the souls which otherwise would perish, will surely be in-gathered. I do not believe, my brethren, that at any time the world has had a dull ear to the gospel. Who have gathered the crowds? Such men as Augustine and Chrysostom. And what was their preaching but the gospel of Jesus Christ. Who have gathered them? Such men as John Huss, and Jerome, and Luther, and Calvin, and the like, about whom there was ever a sweet savor of Christ. Who have gathered them in this land? Who but our Wycliffe and our Knox? Who gathered them in later days but our Whitefield and our Wesley, men who spoke the common language of the people, and who had no theme but Jesus crucified. They will not go to hear your philosophies, they leave you and your philosophies to the spiders and the dry-rot; but preach Jesus, and his precious blood, and tell men that whosoever believeth in Christ shall be saved, and they will hear you gladly. I heard but last week from a missionary who spends nights in working for his Lord in gin-palaces and the lowest resorts of the people, that he has scarcely ever met with an insult; the people received his tracts, and thanked him for his kindly words. I find it continually asserted by our city missionaries and those who visit cab ranks, or omnibus yards, or work among other public servants, that in general there is a willing attention to the gospel. The fields stand ready to reap them, but there are not reapers enough; the grain perishes for want of laborers. The people *are* accessible. What country is there where the gospel cannot be preached? Fast closed was China, but you may go throughout the length and breadth of the land and talk of Christ, if ye will. Japan is open to you, and Africa has laid bare her central secret; Spain, fast shut as with a seal, is this day set free, and Italy rejoices in the same liberty. All the world lies before the

reapers of the Most High, but where are they? "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few."

The idea of *immediate need* is contained in the figure, for the reaping of the harvest is to a considerable extent with the farmer a matter of now or never. "Ah," says he, "if I could postpone the harvest, if I could let it be gathered in by slow degrees, if we could work on till the harvest moon has gone, and then through November and December till winter closes the year, then the scantiness of laborers would be a small evil, but there is a limited time in which the wheat can be safely housed, and it must be got in ere winter begins, or it is lost to us." Ah, my brethren, there is no time for us to waste in the salvation of the sons of men. They will not live forever; yon grey head will not tarry till you have told him the gospel, if you postpone the good news for the next ten years. We speak of what we hope may be accomplished for our race in half a century, but this generation will be buried ere that time. Ye must reap yon harvest at once, or it will be destroyed; it must be ingathered speedily, or it will perish. To-day, to-day, to-day, the imperative necessities of manhood appeal to the benevolence of Christians. To-day the sure destruction of the unbeliever speaks with pleading voice to the humanity of every quickened heart. "We are perishing, will you let us perish? You can only help us by bringing us the gospel *now;* will you delay?"

Thus we have indicated the design of the Master in selecting the figure of a harvest.

II. And now, secondly, I desire to point out to you THE SERVICE NEEDED. The world being represented as a harvest, the need was for "laborers." I have never seen in any commentary or sermon I have yet met with, any working out of the metaphor of laborers in the harvest field, and yet the meaning lies upon the very surface—I will call your attention to it in a moment, when I have noticed, first, that our

Saviour tells us that *laborers are wanted.* There are certain persons in the world who do not believe in instrumentalities, and habitually depreciate them. Our Saviour was not of their mind. He did not say, "The harvest truly is plenteous, and the laborers are few, but that matters not, God can bless a few, and make them accomplish as much as many." He believed in his Father's omnipotence, but he also believed that the Lord would work by means, and that many laborers were required to gather in a plenteous harvest, and therefore he told us to pray for them. He believed in results being proportionate to means used, and he therefore bade us go to the root of the matter practically. Neither did our Lord say, "The laborers are few, therefore pray God to do the work. He can do it alone, and has no need of men. You think too much of men ; your one-man ministry ought to be put away." No, Jesus did not talk so, we do not see any trace of such sentiments in our Saviour's teaching : our Master never made too much of men, but he made a very great deal of men anointed of the Spirit and sent to preach ; in fact he taught us to pray for them ; and the very last thing he did for us when he went to heaven was to give us men, for it is written, "He received gifts for men : and gave some apostles, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." If we despise what Christ evidently prizes as his ascension gift, we may fancy we are honoring God, but we shall grieve his Spirit. He would have us attach great importance to the instrumentality. He bids us know that though God could reap his harvest without men, he will not do it. Could he not bring forth a spiritual reaping machine ? Modern invention has done this for the farmer, and the same idea could be carried out in spiritual things, and so thousands would be converted in an hour without human agency. But the Lord asks for no such inventions, he does not direct us to ask for spiritual reaping machines, but to pray the Master to send laborers into the harvest.

But what kind of men does the Master mean to use? This is indicated in the text. First, they must be *laborers.* The man who does not make hard work of his ministry will find it very hard work to answer for his idleness at the last great day. A gentleman who wants an easy life should never think of occupying the Christian pulpit, he is out of place there, and when he gets there the only advice I can give him is to get out of it as soon as possible; and if he will not leave the position voluntarily, I call to mind the language of Jehu concerning Jezebel, "Fling her down," and think the advice applicable to a lazy minister. An idler has no right in the pulpit. He is an instrument of Satan in damning the souls of men. The ministry demands brain labor; the preacher must throw his thought into his teaching, and read and study to keep his mind in good trim. He must not weary the people by telling them the truth in a stale, unprofitable manner, with nothing fresh from his own soul to give force to it. Above all, he must put heart work into his preaching. He must feel what he preaches: it must never be with him an easy thing to deliver a sermon, he must feel as if he could preach his very life away ere the sermon is done. There must be soul work in it, the entire man must be stirred up to effort, the whole nature that God has endowed him with must be concentrated with all its vigor upon the work in hand. Such men we want. To stand and drone out a sermon in a kind of articulate snoring to a people who are somewhat between awake and asleep must be wretched work. I wonder what kind of excuse will be given by some men at last for having habitually done this. To promulgate a dry creed, and go over certain doctrines, and expound and enforce them logically, but never to deal with men's consciences, never to upbraid them for their sins, never to tell them of their danger, never to invite them to a Saviour with tears and entreaties! What a powerless work is this! What will become of such preachers? God have mercy upon them!

We want laborers not loiterers. We need men on fire, and I beseech you ask God to send them. The harvest never can be reaped by men who will not labor; they must off with their coats and go at it in their shirt-sleeves; I mean they must doff their dignities and get to Christ's work as if they meant it, like real harvest men. They must sweat at their work, for nothing in the harvest field can be done without the sweat of the face, nor in the pulpit without the sweat of the soul.

But what kind of laborers are required? First, they must be *men who will go down into the wheat.* You cannot reap wheat by standing a dozen yards off and beckoning to it: you must go up close to the standing stalks; every reaper knows that. And you cannot move people's hearts, and bring men to Christ, by imagining yourself to be a superior being, who condescends wonderfully when he shakes hands with a poor man. There is a very genteel order of preaching which is as ridiculous as reaping with a lady's ivory-handled pocket knife, with kid gloves on; and I do not believe in God's ever blessing it. Get among the wheat like men in earnest! God's servants ought to feel that they are one with the people; whoever they are they should love them, claim kinship with them, feel glad to see them and look them in the face and say, "brother." Every man is a brother of mine; he may be a very bad one, but for all that I love him, and long to bring him to Jesus. Christ's reapers must get among the wheat.

Now, see what the laborer brings with him. It is a sickle. His communications with the corn are sharp and cutting. *He cuts right through,* cuts the corn down, and casts it on the ground. The man whom God means to be a laborer in his harvest must not come with soft and delicate words, and flattering doctrines concerning the dignity of human nature, and the excellence of self-help, and of earnest endeavors to rectify our lapsed condition, and the like.

Such mealy-mouthedness may God curse, for it is the curse of this age. The honest preacher calls a sin a sin, and a spade a spade, and says to men, "You are ruining yourselves; while you reject Christ you are living on the borders of hell, and ere long you will be lost to all eternity. There shall be no mincing the matter, you must escape from the wrath to come by faith in Jesus, or be driven forever from God's presence, and from all hope of joy." The preacher must make his sermons cut. He is not to file off the edge of his scythe for fear it should hurt somebody. No, my hearers, we mean to hurt you; our sickle is made on purpose to cut. The gospel is intended to wound the conscience, and go right through the heart, with the design of separating the soul from sin and self, as the corn is divided from the soil. Our object is to cut the sinner right down, for all the comeliness of the flesh must be slain, all his glory, all his excellence must be withered, and the man must be as one dead ere he can be saved. Ministers who do not aim to cut deep are not worth their salt. God never sent the man who never troubles men's consciences. Such a man may be an ass treading down the corn, but a reaper he certainly is not. We want faithful ministers; pray God to send them. Ask him to give us men who will preach the whole truth, who will not be afraid of certain humbling doctrines, but will bring out, for instance, the doctrine of election, and not be ashamed, who will tell men that salvation is of the Lord, and will not go about to please them by letting them have a finger in salvation, as though they were to share in the glory of it. Oh for laborers who can use sharp cutting sickles upon ungodly hearts!

But then a laborer has only begun when he cuts the corn: much more is wanted. As he cuts, he lets the corn fall on to his arm, and then he lays it along in rows, but afterwards *he binds it together* and makes it into bundles that it may be ingathered. So the laborer whom God sends

into the field must be a gathering laborer; he must be one who brings God's people together, who comforts those that mourn, and picks up from the earth those who are cut down by the sharp sickle of conviction. He must bind the saints together, edifying them in their most holy faith. Alas, how many have been scatterers, rending churches to pieces. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest to give his church binders who can, by the power of the Holy Spirit, unite men's hearts!

Remember also that the laborer's work is never done in harvest time till he sees the corn housed,—until it is made into a stack or put into a barn, his toil is not over; and the Christian minister, if God has truly anointed him to his work, never leaves caring for souls till they get to heaven. He is like Mr. Greatheart, with Christiana and Mercy, and the children; he goes with them from the City of Destruction, right up to the River Jordan; and if he could he would go through the river with them. It is his business to march in front with his shield, to meet the dragons and giants with his sword, and protect the little ones. It is his to be tender to them as a shepherd with the lambs and a nurse with her children, for he longs to present them at the last to his Master and say, "Here am I, and the children that thou hast given me." Brother minister, ours is a great work, and it never ceases from the first moment when our sickle touches the conscience and wounds it, to the last moment when we are enabled to present our people before the Lord, saved for ever. The church wants men sent of the Holy Ghost who can do all this, by God's help; for though the Lord worketh all things, he does it by men, and men are wanted everywhere that the work may be accomplished.

Thus have we described the service required.

III. The third thing is our Lord DIRECTED HIS DISCIPLES HOW TO OBTAIN A SUPPLY. He bids them pray for such men. Every word here is instructive. "Pray *ye*." Brethren, do

you ever pray God to send such workers into his vineyard? How long since you heard that prayer prayed, except from this pulpit? Pray ye, every one of you. Are you in the habit of doing so every morning and night? Why is there such a dearth of really warm-hearted, loving, earnest evangelists in England? It is because they are not asked for. God will not give them to us if we do not ask for them. If there is one thing noticeable in this church it is our continual prayer that God may be pleased to raise up among us men who will work for him, and he has done it, and he will do it if we continue to pray for it. But if you do not pray that God would send forth the laborers, and the laborers do not come, who is to blame? "Pray *ye*."

"Pray ye *therefore*," he says as if the very fact that there are so many precious souls perishing should be our object for praying. "Lord, it is not a few score that are left untaught and unsaved, but millions in our own land, and hundreds of millions in other lands; therefore, Lord, we do pray thee send forth laborers."

We are to pray *to the Lord*, for it is the Lord's business. Only the Lord can send us the right men. He has a right to send whom he pleases, for it is his own harvest, and a man may employ whom he wills in his own field. It would be all in vain to appeal to anybody else. It is of no use to appeal to bishops to find us laborers. God alone has the making of ministers, and the raising up of true workers, and therefore the petition must be addressed to him. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest." The Lord's prayer, in its first three petitions, contains this prayer: "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven." Does not that mean, "Lord, send forth men who may teach this world to hallow thy name, that they through thy Spirit's power may be the means of making thy kingdom come, and causing thy will to be done in earth as it is in heaven." We

ought to pray continually to the great Lord of the harvest for a supply of earnest laborers.

And do you notice the expression used here, "that he would *send forth* laborers." Now the Greek is much more forcible, it is that he would push them forward, and thrust them out: it is the same word which is used for the expulsion of a devil from a man possessed. It takes great power to drive a devil out, it will need equal power from God to drive a minister out to his work. I always say to young fellows who consult me about the ministry, "Don't be a minister if you can help it;" because, if the man can help it, God never called him, but if he cannot help it, and he must preach or die, then he is the man. May the Lord push men out, thrust them out, drive them out, and compel them to preach the gospel; for unless they preach by a divine compulsion, there will be no spiritual compulsion in their ministry upon the hearts of others. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would thrust out laborers into his harvest."

And do notice, beloved, that our Lord said, "into *his* harvest." I like that, because the harvest is not ours. If that harvest shall not perish, it is our heavenly Father's harvest that perishes. This makes it weigh upon my soul. If they told me that the harvest of some harsh, overbearing tyrant was perishing, I might say, "Let it! If he had it, what good would it be to him or anybody else? He grinds the faces of the poor; who wants to see him rich?" But when it is our gracious God, our blessed loving Father, one cannot bear the thought, and yet Jesus puts it before us that it is God's harvest which is perishing for want of reaping. Suppose an angel should take you upon his wing and poise you in mid-space some hundreds of miles above the earth, where you could look down on the globe with strengthened eyesight; suppose you rested there and the world revolved before you in twenty-four hours, the sunlight gradually coming upon all portions of it, and suppose that with the

sunlight there should be rendered visible certain colors which would mark where there was grace, where there was idolatry, where there was atheism, where there was popery: you would grieve to see only here and there upon our globe, like little drops of dew, bright marks of the grace of God, but various shades of darkness would show you that the whole world lieth in the Wicked One still. And if the vision changed, and you saw the two hemispheres spread out like a map and transformed into a corn field with corn all white for the harvest: how sad would you be to see here and there men reaping their little patches, doing the best they can, but the great mass of the corn untouched by the sickle. You would see leagues of land where never an ear was reaped, that we know of, from the foundation of the world. You would be grieved to think that God's corn is spoiling, men whom he has made in his own image, and made for immortality, perishing for lack of the gospel. "Pray ye," that is the stress of the whole text—"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would thrust forth laborers into his harvest," that these fields may not rot before our eyes.

Will ye pray it, my brethren? This text is laid on my heart; it lies more on my heart than any other in the Bible; it is one that haunts me perpetually, and has done for many years. What can one voice, one tongue do? Therefore it is that we instituted the College, that men might be instructed in the way of God more perfectly, and you, my beloved people, have helped me these many years, for which I thank you, thank you lovingly, and with all my heart. You have never ceased from that best of works, and therefore, you as a church, can honestly pray, because you work as well as pray. Some churches cannot do so, they despise the teaching of a man of utterance, so that he may read the Scriptures in the original tongue, and speak his own language correctly; but you have taken tenderly and generously to the work, and God has blessed you;

and at this very moment some three hundred of your sons, nursed at your knees, are preaching the selfsame gospel which we are preaching here, for which let God be praised. While we give let us pray, and when we have prayed, let us give; that God may send forth laborers into his harvest.

IV. The last point is this: THE LORD JESUS HEARD THEIR PRAYERS, he did send forth laborers. I feel vexed with the fellow who chopped the Bible up into chapters; I forget his name just now, and I am sure it is not worth recollecting. I have heard that he did the most of his carving of the New Testament between London and Paris, and rough work he made of it. Surely he was chaptering the gospel of Matthew while he was crossing the Channel, for he has divided it in such queer places. He has chopped this passage in two. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." Down comes the meat axe, right across a bone. Let us put the bones together, and read what is next. "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out." It appears, then, that the Lord told them to pray that God would raise up laborers, and then called them to be the laborers themselves. "You have been praying for men," said he; "and you are the very men yourselves." He puts his hands upon them one by one. "You prayed God to send out laborers, come hither Matthew, come hither Peter, James, John. I heard you pray as I told you, and behold I send you forth to work for me." What if God this morning should move some of you to feel that men are perishing, and you cannot let them perish! What if you should pray, "Lord, send out men to save souls," and then he should put his hands on you and say, "You are the man yourself. Behold I send you!" I do not suppose the twelve dreamed for a moment that they would be sent forth to be reapers, but so the Lord of the harvest had decreed. Have I not some men here who

if they thought it over would say, "Lord, I am of uncouth speech, and I cannot serve thee as I would, but such as I have give I thee." And, dear brother, when you begin to talk about the Saviour, you do not know how well you will succeed; and if you do not please yourself that does not signify if you please God. There is another, a man who has been dumb half his life, and yet, if he did but know it, has force and power in him. "But I shall never preach," saith one. If you do not preach you can serve God somehow else. Could you not start a prayer-meeting in your house? Some of you live in different parts of London, could not you commence new interests? Do something for Jesus. Some of you, good women, could you not get young women together and talk to them about the Saviour? Ay, but perhaps I have some brother here who has been smothering in his heart a desire to go into the missionary field. Brother, do not quench the Spirit. You may be missing your vocation while trying to suppress that desire. I would sooner you should burst into fanaticism, some of you, and become right down fools in enthusiasm, than remain as the church now is in a dead coolness, caring little for the souls of men. What do Christian people now-a-days think of? If they hear about Japan, they say, "Oh, we shall have a new trade there;" but do they say, "Who among us can go to Japan to tell them of the gospel?" Do you not think that merchants, and soldiers, and sailors, and such like people who trade with distant parts of the world are the very persons to spread the gospel? Should not a Christian man say, "I shall try and find a trade for myself which will bring me into contact with a class of persons that need the gospel, and I will use my trade as the stalking-horse for Christ; since hypocrites use religion as a stalking-horse for gain, I will make my trading subservient to my religion. "Oh," says one, "we can leave that to the society." God bless the society, and, I was going to say, smother the society, rather

than allow it to smother personal effort. We want our godly merchants, working men, soldiers, and sailors everywhere to feel "I cannot go and get a proxy in the shape of a society to do this for me; in the name of God, I will do it myself, and have a share in this great battle." If you cannot labor yourself, the society is the grandest thing conceivable, for you may help others thereby; but still the main cry from Christ is that you yourself should go into the highways and hedges, and as many as you find compel them to come in to the gospel feast. The world is dying, the grave is filling, hell is boasting, and yet you have the gospel; can it be that you do not care to win souls, do not care whether men are damned or saved! The Lord wake us from this stony-hearted barbarity to our fellow-men, and make us yearn over them, care about them, pray about them, and work for them, till the Lord shall arise and send forth laborers into his harvest!

But I recollect that some of you may very well be unconcerned about others, for you are unconcerned about yourselves. Oh, I do implore you, remain so no longer. Live not upon the brink of the grave without a Saviour! Sport not between the jaws of hell, but fly to him, to him who never did reject a sinner who came to him, and never will. God hear you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SERMON X.

THE FATHER'S WILL.

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him shall have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."—John vi. 39, 40.

SUCH our impertinent curiosity that we would fain peer between the folded leaves of the divine purposes. The eager thirst of man to discover secrets, to solve mysteries, to draw aside the folded curtains, and to ascertain that which is past finding out, tempts him full often to the wildest conjecture and the most adventurous speculation. To get sight of the future how many would rush to any part of the earth were it possible to light upon a spot from which they could reconnoitre the times and the seasons. To know that which God conceals seems to be one of the depraved desires of the human heart. This presumptuous inquiry is both foolish and sinful. What hast thou to do, O man! with God's councils? To obey him is thy work, not to attempt to know what he does not please to reveal. But let us understand that the gospel is an extract from the will of God, and such an extract that it contains the very essence thereof. Certainly there is nothing

in the will of God contrary to the gospel. Among the unrevealed things there cannot be anything in conflict with the revealed things; none of the secrets can possibly contradict those truths which God has seen fit to unfold. O then, you that want to know the will of God, here is something of it for you closely to observe and diligently to study! If you want to read that will, here it is given to you in two forms: "This is the Father's *will* (the will of him which hath sent Jesus, his only-begotten Son, to be our Saviour,) that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." And here is that same will again opened up before you, if you have but hearts to receive it: "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

The will of God is our salvation. It was from the will of God that the very thought of salvation first arose. Had we been left to our own wills, we should have been willing to wander further and further from God. No man originated the idea of restoration for our race; God himself willed it, and it is from the purpose of his grace that all our hopes begin; and the will which originated salvation shaped and formed it. It was God's will that ordained salvation by faith, salvation through an atoning sacrifice, salvation by the way of the new birth, salvation by the way of perseverance up to perfection. God cast in his own mould the way and *modus* of salvation, and it has been his will that has shaped it; like a vessel revolving upon the wheel before him, his finger has made the form and fashion of it. According to his own will begat he us that we might be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. It is his will that has brought those of us who are saved into the knowledge of the truth, by which will also we are sanctified, and upon which will we rely, as the motive force which will bear us onward throughout the entire of our lives; bear

us over the regions of death, and bear us into the land of the perfect, where we shall see the face of God without sin.

Now, it is about this will of God that we are going to speak, taking the two phrases as setting forth *the divine side of salvation* and *the human side of salvation.* You know, beloved friends, that the general custom is, with the various sects of Christians, to take up one part of the Bible and preach that part, and then it is the duty of all divines on that side of the question not to preach anything but that. Or if they find a text that looks in rather a different direction, these gentlemen are expected to twist it round to suit their creed, it being supposed that only one set of truths can possibly be worth defending, it never having entered into the heads of some people that there can be two apparently irreconcilable truths which nevertheless are equally valuable. Think not that I come here to defend the human side of salvation at the expense of the divine ; nor am I desirous to magnify the divine side of it at the expense of the human ; rather would I beseech you to look at the two texts which are together before us, and to be prepared to receive both sets of truths. I think it a very dangerous thing to say that the truth lies between the two extremes. It does not ; the truth lies in the two, in the comprehension of both ; not in taking a part from this and a part from that, toning down one and modulating the other, as is too much the custom, but in believing and giving full expression to everything that God reveals whether we can reconcile the things or not, opening our hearts as children open their understandings to their father's teaching, feeling that if the gospel were such that we could make it into a complete system, we might be quite sure it was not God's gospel, for any system that comes from God must be too grand for the human brain to grasp at one effort ; and any path that he takes must extend too far beyond the line of our vision for us to make a nice little map of it, and mark it out in squares.

This world, you know, we can readily enough map. Go and get charts, and you shall find that men of understanding have indicated almost every rock in the sea, almost every hamlet on the land; but they cannot map out the heavens in that way, for albeit that you can buy the celestial atlas, yet as you are well enough aware there is not one in ten thousand of the stars that can possibly be put there; when they are resolved by the telescope they become altogether innumerable, and so far exceed all count that it is impossible for us to reckon them up in order and say, that is the name of this, and this is the name of that. We must leave them: they are beyond us. There are deeps into which we cannot peer; even the strongest glass cannot show us much more than a mere corner of the starry worlds. Thus too is it with the doctrines of the gospel: they are too bright for our weak eyes, too sublime for our finite minds to scan, save at a humble distance. Be it ours to take all we can of their solemn import, to believe them heartily, accept them gratefully, and then fall down before the Lord, and pour out our very souls in worshipping him.

I. Well, now we come to our two texts. The first is the DIVINE SIDE OF THE WORK OF SALVATION. It needeth to come first, such is its dignity. "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

Mark attentively the announcement, how *sovereign its character!* "This is the Father's will." Majestic words—"This is the Father's will." No "if," no "but," no asking and requesting of men, no bending the knee to their choice or caprice, no asking them if they will please to have it so, but—"This is the Father's will." That is the will which is altogether absolute and independent, revolving on its own axis, the will that called creation out of nothing, the will which cannot be thwarted, for it is omnipotent, which none

may stand against, for it proceedeth ever on its eternal course. It is a fixed will, for God is not fickle as we are, he doth not will this to-day and that to-morrow. "I am God," saith he, "and change not." He is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,"—a fixed, irresistible will, standing the same from everlasting to everlasting; not subject to change. Would you have it change for the better? How could that be? Can God be better? Would you have it change for the worse? Would God be God if he could be worse than he is? How can it be that perfection can change? It must ever remain perfection: a change were to bring in imperfection into that which is complete. To God's eternal mind there is no past, there is no future.

> "He fills his own eternal now,
> And sees her ages past."

Looking as he does from heaven, he takes in at one glance all those periods of time which we are accustomed to call ages and cycles; they are all as the twinkling of an eye to him, for "a thousand years in his sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." Let me, then again read these words, they concern the salvation of his people. "This is the Father's will." I say again how grand they are. "This is the Father's will." O God, I tremble at thy will, until I read those lines; I know not what thy will may be, and since I know it must be accomplished I cower down at thy feet in terror until I read that mercy is the Father's will, that love is the Father's will, that salvation is the Father's will, and then my heart flies into thy bosom with ecstasy and joy, to think that thine omnipotent, unchangeable will should be such good-will; so full of benevolence, so full of love!

Following the current of this testimony, we are introduced to *the obedient servant of that will.* "This is the

Father's will, which hath sent me." Read the thirty-eighth verse:—"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Christ, then, is the obedient-sent servant of his Father's will. But why doth he say, "*not to do my own will*"? The meaning, I doubt not, as Dr. Owen well interprets it, is first or primarily, in reply to the malicious charge of the Jews, "that he was not intent to accomplish or bring about any private purposes of his own distinct or different from those of his Father." But more than this, "the will of God, which Christ came to fulfil, is sometimes taken for the commandment which he received from the Father." So he saith in the fortieth Psalm, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." As though he should protest "all that thou requirest at my hand as mediator I am ready to perform." Was it not to this end that he did verily "take on him the form of a servant"? And for the self-same cause did not the Father expressly call his servant, as you read in the forty-second chapter of Isaiah—"Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles"? Thus is he the servant of the Father in the accomplishment of that work for which the Spirit was put upon him. Moreover, the "will of God" may be taken for this purpose, his decrees, his good pleasure, to fulfil which Christ came into the world. It is thus little by little that the full sense of the words breaks on our minds. Now, as I turn that over in my mind, "*not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me*," I am prone to reflect, "It is for me to lay down my will at God's feet." Well, it is but fit and right for all of us to do so. For every one of us to say: "I came not to do mine own will," seems natural and proper. But Christ, beloved,—his will is perfect, his will is as complete as the will of God itself; it is, in fact, coincident, must be coincident, with the will of God.

But he speaks as God-man—mediator, and he puts it so, that he may be to us the pattern of complete resignation and perfect obedience. "I, even I, who have no difference with God, who am God, who will as God wills, yet I came not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." Why, think you, was it needful that he should say that? It was needful, as I have already said, as an example to us, but further needful that every one of us may know that Christ is no amateur Saviour, come into the world to save without a commission and without authority. He has come here willingly enough, but still the reason of his coming is his Father's will. When Christ forgives a sinner it is his Father's will: when Christ receives a rebel to his bosom, it is his Father's will. He does not save us clandestinely or in any manner inconsiderate of or contrary to the divine purposes, nor yet in some such way as though by the tenderness of a friend he would rescue us from the sternness of a judge. No, no, in no wise; for all that Jesus does is the Father's will, as he would say of us, "I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you." The will which Christ is doing is the Father's will. All that he is engaged to bring about is according to the will of the Father. Let us bless his name for that.

Well now; it would appear that God in his divine will was pleased to give to Jesus, his obedient servant, a number of men out of mankind who were to be his. Is not that the plain meaning of the passage, "This is the will of him that sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing"? The Father gave to the Son, then, a number, I believe it was a number that no man can number, a number far beyond the bounds of our thought; but he did give a certain number whom he himself had chosen from before the foundation of the world, and these became the property of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were put under a different government, being placed under the mediatorial sway of the

Son of God. They became disciples—not by their own natural inclination, but by his gracious calling: they became Christ's flock, he was their shepherd; they were to become Christ's body, he was to be the head: in due time they were to be Christ's bride, he was to be the husband; they were to be Christ's brethren, and they were to be conformed to him that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Now this is a great transaction full of sublimity,—let us not forget it or slight it. There was a day before all days when there was no day but the Ancient of Days, and then the Ancient of Days in his eternal wisdom transferred a number of men whom he had chosen into the hands of Jesus Christ. It is of no use cavilling at it; it is true; it was so; and it is so; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. God's eternal and electing purpose severed from the mass of mankind a people who were to belong to Jesus. Let us say "Amen" to the record.

The next thing we learn here is that all these persons *Jesus Christ undertook to keep.* It was the Father's will that of all who were given to Christ he should lose—what?—"lose nothing." This is a very remarkable expression. It does not say he should lose none, that is true; but lose no thing, "nothing." The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, has taken all those who were given of the Father to him, into his custody. He is the Surety, he is responsible for them, and he keeps them. In what way does he keep them? Seeing they were lost he redeemed them: seeing they were far from him he fetches them back of his grace, by the power of his Spirit: seeing that they are still prone to wander he restores their souls; seeing that they are imperfect he sanctifies them; and he will continue the work of sanctification, and he will make them one day to be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

But the text says he will "lose nothing," by which he means that while he will certainly not lose one that his

Father gave him, he will not lose any part of one of them. For look at that child of God who died a few months ago; we laid him in the grave with many tears, and we believe his spirit is taken up to the right hand of God, but where is his body? Ah, we should not like to exhume it; it would be a terrible spectacle if we should take it out of that coffin, or open the lid and look at all that mass of putridity. Surely this is part of one of Christ's people that has been lost! Ah, but it is not his Father's will that Christ should lose anything of what was given him; and therefore he adds, "I will raise it up at the last day." When the trumpet sounds the dead shall come forth from their graves, and there shall not be left in the grave a bone, nor a piece of a bone of one of the Lord's redeemed; they shall come again from the land of the enemy, and leave nothing behind them. When Israel came out of Egypt the great Master did not bring some of the people out and leave some behind. Oh, no! Neither did he bring all the people, and leave their property behind. Did not Moses say to Pharaoh, "There shall not a hoof be left behind;" not a solitary lamb of all the flocks, there shall not be one left behind. And so out of the entire company that God the Father has given into the custody of Jesus, there shall not only not be one soul lost, but no part of any of them; neither of their body, of their soul, nor of their spirit. Death shall yield up its captives, they shall be completely free :—

> "Then all the chosen race
> Shall meet around the throne,
> To bless the conduct of his grace
> And make his glories known."

That is the divine side of salvation, and that is the truth which this first part of our text teaches.

Do I hear somebody say, "I think that doctrine is dangerous"? My dear sir, who is it dangerous to but fools?

If God has taught it there can be no danger in it. At the same time there never was a truth which foolish persons could not distort and turn into mischief. Ropes are good things, but many people have hung themselves with them; and there is many a grand doctrine which men wrest to their own destruction, and we cannot be shaping God's truth down to consult the folly and sin of man. The question is, is it in the Bible? If it is there let none of us ever say it is dangerous. "Well, but," say you, "is it not all about secret things?" Be it so; then you need not be at all alarmed at our talking about it, for none of us can divulge anything which is secret: therefore you need not be under any concern that we shall do it. If it be secret, then so far as it is secret we cannot intermeddle with it; but we do say this, that whatever of it has been revealed is for us, and for our children, and we are not ashamed to speak of what God was not ashamed to declare.

Moreover we have proved it to be good, comfortable, solid, soul-sustaining, sanctifying doctrine, for if there is anything in this world that can put into a man force, life, energy, it is the belief that God has chosen him unto eternal life, has put into him an unconquerable nature which must fight against sin until it overcomes it, and that Christ is engaged to bring him safely to the right hand of the Most High. Why, the gratitude of a man that believes this becomes the master-power of his life.

"Loved of my God, for him again
With love intense I burn;
Chosen of him ere time began
I choose Him in return."

Slaves are whipped to the battle, but the freeman goes cheerfully to fight for the cause dear to his heart. The man that only lives a good life because he is afraid of being damned is a mere hireling in the house of God; but the man who

knows that he is God's own child, and never will be anything else, that God loves him and must love him, says now, out of no desire of reward and no fears of punishment, being saved, forever saved, "I love my Lord with all my heart and soul and strength, and I will render to him the obedience of a child which is infinitely superior to the obedience of a slave." I question the possibility of virtue to a man who cannot say, "I am saved." He that does good works in order to his being saved, or in order to keep himself from the peril of being lost, acts from a selfish motive, and is serving himself rather than his God. But he, on the other hand, who feels that he is bought with a price and *is* delivered, *is* saved, *is* a child of God, can say, "Now I have not myself to consider but my God. Now will I live for him, now will I spend and be spent, that I may glorify his name." The Lord grant to us to be brought into that condition in which we can understand and enjoy this doctrine, and may we then by our lives prove our gratitude for the great benefits we have received of him.

II. Now I am going to take the HUMAN SIDE, and I think I hear somebody say,—"Though I liked the first part, I know I shall not like the second." Dear hearer, what right have you to cavil at aught that is true? Somebody on the other hand may say, "I do not believe in this first part, perhaps I may in the second." My dear friend, I wish you would give up that notion of picking and choosing parts of God's word that are agreeable to our taste; but rather take the whole from the beginning of it to the end of it, so you shall find pleasure and profit all the way through. Truly, brethren, it is shocking to think of the theoretical difficulties that people make for themselves by a kind of smart criticism that seems clever, but lacks common sense. In this very chapter, at the twenty-seventh verse, you read—"Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you."

The fact is, you get here two paradoxes in one sentence. You are told *not* to labor for that meat which no man can procure *without* labor, and you are told *to* labor for that bread which no man can procure BY labor because it is a free gift. Howbeit, the thing needs no explanation. It is clear as daylight to every discerning heart. Here, then, is the human side of salvation : "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Observe, there is no lowering of the tone. The same august words strike us on the threshold of each announcement. "This is the will of him that sent me." The freest proclamations of the gospel that can ever be given are as much divine as are the plainest declarations of distinguishing grace. Listen, then, with equal attention to this second part, for this has the same imprimatur, the same divine stamp upon it :—"This is the will of him that sent me."

Notice again that there is the same obedient servant engaged on this occasion as before. *Whether* you look at the divine side or the human side of salvation, the most conspicuous object is still Jesus Christ. If God looks down on men it is through his Anointed, or if men look up to God, it is through God's Christ whom he has sent. The points of difference we will therefore dwell upon. In this second verse the persons described as partakers of the benefit of salvation are thus described : "Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him."

What are we to understand by these words—"Every one which seeth the Son" ? We cannot see the Son now with our natural organs of sight ; for Jesus has gone up to heaven. With these optics we cannot scan his features or perceive his presence. But when we read of him in the Evangelists, and when we hear of him from the mouths of his servants, we do in effect see him evidently set forth before us. The eyes

of our understanding discern him. The sense of faith recognizes him. Now if by that sight, that knowledge, that information, we are led to believe on him, then we have everlasting life. Whoever he may be—"Every one," it says—"Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him," comes in for the same privilege. This includes the man with great faith, but it equally includes the babe with little faith. This includes the man of reputable character, but it equally includes the man whose character has been up till now disreputable. "Every one that believeth on him." Does it mean that if I believe on him I have eternal life? Yes, whoever you are; you may listen to it in the dark, I do not want to look at you to discriminate between one individual and another. The assertion is wide enough for all of you. Are you a black man, or a white man? Are you a yellow man, or a brown man? It matters not. Are you rich, or are you poor, one in the higher ranks, or one obscure and despised? It matters not. Whoever you may be, every child of man that is born of woman, that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, shall have eternal life. Are there no exceptions? None whatever. Can it not be supposed that some characters may be excluded? None are excluded hence but those who do themselves exclude. The learned and polite, the ignorant and rude, "every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." That is to say, to go over the same matter yet again, every man, woman, child, every one of the human race that trusts his soul with the Son of God, has everlasting life. "Well, but," saith one, "suppose I should not have been given by God the Father to the Son?" You have no right to suppose that. If you believe in Jesus Christ you have everlasting life. I could explain, I think, a little to you, at least I have a way of explaining it to myself, how these two meet. I do not care to explain it, I do not think it is necessary at all, for it is so. There never was a soul that believed on

Jesus yet but God the Father had given that soul to Christ; there never was a soul that trusted the Saviour yet but it turned out that after all that soul had been ordained to do so from before the foundation of the world. We will not attempt to answer objections. There is the truth, the plain, naked truth. This is the will of him that sent the Saviour into the world, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should at once have eternal life. O what a splendid gospel that is! Now, when I go out to preach I have not to say, "I am going to preach to God's elect"—not at all: "Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life;" nor have I said to myself, "Now I shall pick out certain characters that I think must be a delineation of God's chosen." I have no right to make any picking or choosing, there is the Gospel,—"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." And this again is the gospel: "That every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." There let it stand, then; we will not clip its wings but we will rejoice in its simple verity.

Now it appears that these persons who believe in Jesus, whoever they may be, are already in a present state of safety, for as soon as they believe on him they have everlasting life, they are made alive unto God, they receive a spiritual life which they never had before. The Holy Ghost comes into them and quickens them. Whereas they were heretofore dead in trespasses and sins, the Holy Ghost makes them alive unto God by Jesus Christ. And this is true of every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him. This life which is thus given is a life that cannot die, for it is everlasting. Everlasting life is freely and sovereignly bestowed, so that every believer has in him a vital principle which cannot be destroyed any more than God himself can. For as God's life is everlasting life, so the life of every believer is called "everlasting life." O see the blessedness of this, "that

every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." We do not seem to want to preach upon that; I like to roll it over under my tongue. I should like everybody here that is perplexing himself about the dootrines of the gospel, and saying, "Perhaps I am shut out from the mercy of God," just to go home repeating these words. Therefore I will repeat them again: "That every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." And since notwithstanding this gift of everlasting life the bodies of believers die, Jesus Christ has added here that it is the will of the Father that he should "raise him up at the last day." It seems, then, beloved, that no believer shall be lost and nothing of a believer, for if his body must be put into the ground, corruption, earth and worms shall but refine his flesh, till at the sound of the last trumpet he shall put it on afresh. "I will raise him up at the last day." Then it seems that if I am a believer in Jesus I may conclude that God the Father gave me to Christ to save me, and that Christ will save me and keep me until he himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and call his own redeemed out of the graves. Thus the two truths are reconciled—may they be reconciled in our experience as well as in our faith!

Now, then, to close, let me say to any troubled person here present: Beloved friend, never fear that there is anything in the secret purposes of God which can contradict the open promises of God. Never dream, if you are a believer, that there can be any dark decree that shuts you out from the benefits of grace. Decrees or no decrees, "this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." Lay hold, therefore, on Christ with all your heart, poor sinner; ask not to know whether thy name is in the Book of Life; come just as thou art, by God's own invitation, and lay hold on Jesus Christ. The woman in the press could not tell

whether it was written in the book of decrees that she should be healed, but she came behind the Saviour and touched the hem of his garment, and was made whole. The dying thief did not stop to inquire, "Was I chosen of God ere time began?" but he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Now do you in like manner act upon your present exigence, and fit your prayer to the present opportunity. The doctrine of decrees never operates upon a man's ordinary life. What hungry man would halt, or hesitate, or say, "I cannot tell whether it is the purpose of God that I should eat," but when the provision is spread out before him he eats. Would the weary man vex his soul with misgivings, and say, "I want to know whether it is the purpose of God I should sleep?" nay, but he acts like a sensible creature and goes to his bed at the time of rest, grateful for the interval of deep repose that can renew his strength and freshen up his vital powers. Now do you go and do likewise. Do not rebel at the purposes, or deny them, but act upon the precepts, and rejoice in them; they are the guide for you. Rely upon the promises; that is the way for you to realize them: and inasmuch as the clear promise rings out from the eternal throne, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," do thou go and see if he will cast thee out. Come, thou black sinner, thou foul sinner, thou devilish sinner—come thou who art stained with every sin, come and see if Christ will reject thee; and recollect that the text that should encourage thee stands hard by that which may embarrass thee—close to it—where Jesus says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." I do pray that those words may encourage many souls to come.

And once more, fear not that if you believe, your believing will end in failure. If you believe in Jesus Christ, the

text says, "It is the Father's will" that you should "have eternal life," and be "raised up at the last day." The question sometimes comes to one's mind—"After I have believed in Jesus, and placed all my hope in him, may I not after all perish? Is there not something expected of me in which I may fail? If I rest upon him as a rock, yet still are there not some other props and buttresses wanted, and if I shall not supply them shall I be safe at last?" Well, I frankly confess if there be anything wanted as the ground of a sinner's hope beyond the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, I, who preach to you, must certainly perish, for I can sing the hymn we sang this morning with all my heart—

> "Other refuge have I none,
> Hangs my helpless soul on thee;
> Leave, oh, leave me not alone,
> Still support and comfort me."

We desire to abound in good works; we desire to destroy every vice, and forsake all falsehood and all evil; but we cannot depend on these things, we cannot mix them up with the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Our one hope lies here, that Jesus died, and God hath said it, "He that believeth on him hath eternal life, and shall be raised up at the last day." Now suppose, after all, you should believe on him and find at last that you are not saved! Beloved, the supposition cannot be entertained for a moment, for it is written, "It is the Father's will." Is that will to be thwarted? It is written that he has sent Christ: has Christ come in vain? God must be false to all his promises, belie his oath, degrade his Son, before he can suffer a soul that seeth the Son and believeth on him to perish. You are all safe enough if you are resting there. Do not let a doubt disturb you. Go your way full of peace and consolation, and the Lord be with you! But, oh, if you have never believed in Jesus, may your spirits never know any rest till you do! May you never be content till you flee to him, and rest on him! The Lord grant it, for his dear name's sake. Amen.

SERMON XI.

HOW A MAN'S CONDUCT COMES HOME TO HIM.

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied.—Proverbs xiv. 14.

A COMMON principle is here laid down and declared to be equally true in reference to two characters, who in other respects are a contrast. Men are affected by the course which they pursue; for good or bad their own conduct comes home to them. The backslider and the good man are very different, but in each of them the same rule is exemplified—they are both filled by the result of their lives. The backslider becomes filled by that which is within him, as seen in his life, and the good man also is filled by that which grace implants within his soul. The evil leaven in the backslider leavens his entire being and sours his existence, while the gracious fountain in the sanctified believer saturates his whole manhood, and baptizes his entire life. In each case the fulness arises from that which is within the man, and is in its nature like the man's character; the fulness of the backslider's misery will come out of his own ways, and the fulness of the good man's content will spring out of the love of God which is shed abroad in his heart.

The meaning of this passage will come out better if we begin with an illustration. Here are two pieces of sponge, and we wish to fill them: you shall place one of them in a pool of foul water, it will be filled, and filled with that which it lies in; you shall put the other sponge into a pure crystal stream, and it will also become full, full of the element in which it is placed. The backslider lies asoak in the dead sea of his own ways, and the brine fills him; the good man is plunged like a pitcher into "Siloa's brook, which flows hard by the oracle of God," and the river of the water of life fills him to the brim. A wandering heart will be filled with sorrow, and a heart confiding in the Lord will be satisfied with joy and peace. Or take two farmsteads; one farmer sows tares in his field, and in due time his barns are filled therewith; another sows wheat, and his garners are stored with precious grain. Or follow out our Lord's parable: one builder places his frail dwelling on the sand, and, when the tempest rages, he is swept away in it, naturally enough; another lays deep the foundations of his house, and sets it fast on a rock, and as an equally natural consequence he smiles upon the storm, protected by his well-founded dwelling-place. What a man is by sin or by grace will be the cause of his sorrow or his satisfaction.

I. I shall take the two characters without further preface, and first let us speak awhile about THE BACKSLIDER. This is a very solemn subject, but one which it is needful to bring before the present audience, since we all have some share in it. I trust there may not be many present who are backsliders in the worst sense of the term, but very, very few among us are quite free from the charge of having backslidden, in some measure, at some time or other since conversion. Even those who sincerely love the Master sometimes wander, and we all need to take heed lest there be in any one of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

There are several kinds of persons who may with more or less propriety be comprehended under the term "backsliders," and these will each in his own measure be filled with his own ways.

There are, first, *apostates*, those who unite themselves with the church of Christ, and act for a time as if they were subjects of a real change of heart. These persons are frequently very zealous for a season, and may become prominent, if not eminent, in the church of God. They did run well, like those mentioned by the apostle, but by some means they are, first of all, hindered, and slacken their pace; after that they linger and loiter, and leave the crown of the causeway for the side of the road. By-and-by in their hearts they go back into Egypt and at last, finding an opportunity to return, they break loose from all the restraints of their profession, and openly forsake the Lord. Truly the last end of such men is worse than the first. Judas is the great type of these pre-eminent backsliders. Judas was a professed believer in Jesus, a follower of the Lord, a minister of the gospel, an apostle of Christ, the trusted treasurer of the college of the apostles, and after all turned out to be the "son of perdition" who sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. He ere long was filled with his own ways, for, tormented with remorse, he threw down the blood-money he had so dearly earned, hanged himself, and went to his own place. The story of Judas has been written over and over again in the lives of other traitors. We have heard of Judas as a deacon, and as an elder; we have heard Judas preach, we have read the works of Judas the bishop, and seen Judas the missionary. Judas sometimes continues in his profession for many years, but, sooner or later, the true character of the man is discovered; his sin returns upon his own head, and if he does not make an end of himself, I do not doubt but what, even in this life, he often lives in such horrible remorse that his soul would choose

strangling rather than life. He has gathered the grapes of Gomorrah, and he has to drink the wine ; he has planted a bitter trèe, and he must eat the fruit thereof. Oh sirs, may none of you betray your Lord and Master. God grant I never may. "*Traitor! Traitor!*" Shall that ever be written across your brow ? You have been baptized into the name of the adorable Trinity, you have eaten the tokens of the Redeemer's body and blood, you have sung the songs of Zion, you have stood forward to pray in the midst of the people of God, and will you act so base a part as to betray your Lord ? Shall it ever be said of you, "Take him to the place from whence he came, for he is a traitor ?" I cannot conceive of anything more ignominious than for a soldier to be drummed out of a regiment of Her Majesty's soldiers, but what must it be to be cast out of the host of God ! What must it be to be set up as the target of eternal shame and everlasting contempt for having crucified the Lord afresh, and put him to an open shame ! How shameful will it be to be branded as an apostate from truth and holiness, from Christ and his ways. Better never to have made a profession than to have belied it so wretchedly, and to have it said of us, "it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again ; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Of such has John said, "They went out from us, but they were not of us ; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us ; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

This title of backslider applies also to another class, not so desperate but still most sad, of which not Judas but David may serve as the type : we refer to backsliders *who go into open sin.* There are men who descend from purity to careless living, and from careless living to indulgence of the flesh, and from indulgence of the flesh in little matters into known sin, and from one sin to another till they

plunge into uncleanness. They have been born again, and therefore the trembling and almost extinct life within must and shall revive and bring them to repentance; they will come back weary, weeping, humbled, and broken-hearted, and they will be restored, but they will never be what they were before; their voices will be hoarse, like that of David after his crime, for he never again sung so jubilantly as in his former days. Life will be more full of trembling and trial, and manifest less of buoyancy and joy of spirit. Broken bones make hard travelling, and even when they are set they are very subject to shooting pains when ill weathers are abroad. I may be addressing some of this sort this morning, and if so I would speak with much faithful love. Dear brother, if you are now following Jesus afar off, you will, ere long, like Peter, deny him. Even though you will obtain mercy of the Lord, yet the text will certainly be fulfilled in you, and you will be "filled with your own ways." As certainly as Moses took the golden calf and ground it into powder, and then mixed it with the water which the sinful Israelites had to drink, till they all tasted the grit in their mouths, so will the Lord do with you if you are indeed his child: he will take your idol of sin and grind it to powder, and your life shall be made bitter with it for years to come. When the gall and wormwood are most manifest in the cup of life it will be a mournful thing to feel "I procured this unto myself by my shameful folly." O Lord, hold thou us up, and keep us from falling by little and little, lest we plunge into overt sin and continue in it for a season; for surely the anguish which comes of such an evil is terrible as death itself. If David could rise from his grave and appear before you with his face seamed with sorrow and his brow wrinkled with his many griefs, he would say to you "Keep your hearts with all diligence, lest ye bring woe upon yourselves. Watch unto prayer, and guard against the beginnings of sin lest

your bones wax old through your roarings, and your moisture be turned into the drought of summer." O beware of a wandering heart, for it will be an awful thing to be filled with your own backslidings.

But there is a third sort of backsliding, and I am afraid a very large number of us have at times come under the title—I mean those *who in any measure or degree, even for a very little time, decline from the point which they have reached.* Perhaps such a man hardly ought to be called a backslider, because it is not his predominant character, yet he backslides. If he does not believe as firmly, and love as intensely, and serve as zealously as he formerly did, he has in a measure backslidden, and any measure of backsliding, be it less or be it more, is sinful, and will in proportion as it is real backsliding fill us with our own ways. If you only sow two or three seeds of the thistle there will not be so many of the ill weeds on your farm as if you had emptied out a whole sack, but still there will be enough and more than enough. Every little backsliding, as men call it, is a great mischief; every little going back even *in heart* from God, if it never comes to words or deeds, yet will involve us in some measure of sorrow. If sin were clean removed from us sorrow would be removed also, in fact we should be in heaven, since a state of perfect holiness must involve perfect blessedness. Sin, in any degree, will bear its own fruit, and that fruit will be sure to set our teeth on edge; it is ill therefore to be a backslider even in the least degree.

Having said so much, let me now continue to think of the last two kinds of backsliders, and leave out the apostate. Let us first *read his name,* and then let us read his history, we have both in our text.

The first part of his name is "*backslider.*" He is not a back runner, nor a back leaper, but a back*slider*, that is to say he slides back with an easy, effortless motion, softly, quietly, perhaps unsuspected by himself or anybody else.

The Christian life is very much like climbing a hill of ice. You cannot slide up, nay, you have to cut every step with an ice axe ; only with incessant labor in cutting and chipping can you make any progress ; you need a guide to help you, and you are not safe unless you are fastened to the guide, for you may slip into a crevasse. Nobody ever slides *up*, but if great care be not taken they will slide down, slide back, or in other words backslide. This is very easily done. If you want to know how to backslide, the answer is leave off going forward and you will slide backward, cease going upward and you will go downward of necessity, for stand still you never can. To lead us to backslide, Satan acts with us as engineers do with a road down the mountain's side. If they desire to carry the road from yonder alp right down into the valley far below, they never think of making the road plunge over a precipice, or straight down the face of the rock, for nobody would ever use such a road ; but the road-makers wind and twist. See, the track descends very gently to the right, you can hardly see that it does run downwards ; anon it turns to the left with a small incline, and so, by turning this way and then that, the traveller finds himself in the vale below. Thus the crafty enemy of souls fetches saints down from their high places ; whenever he gets a good man down it is usually by slow degrees. Now and then, by sudden opportunity and strong temptation, the Christian man has been plunged right from the pinnacle of the temple into the dungeon of despair in a moment, but it is not often the case ; the gentle decline is the devil's favorite piece of engineering, and he manages it with amazing skill. The soul scarcely knows it is going down, and it seems to be maintaining the even tenor of its way, but ere long it is far below the line of peace and consecration. Our dear brother, Dr. Arnot, of the Free Church, illustrates this very beautifully by supposing a balance. This is the heavy scale loaded with seeds, and the other is high in the air. One morning you are

very much surprised to find that what had been the heavier scale is aloft, while the other has descended. You do not understand it till you discover that certain little insects had silently transferred the seeds one by one. At first they made no apparent change, by-and-by there was a little motion, one more little seed was laid in the scales and the balance turned in a moment. Thus silently the balance of a man's soul may be affected, and everything made ready for that one temptation by which the fatal turn is made, and the man becomes an open transgressor. Apparently insignificant agencies may gradually convey our strength from the right side to the wrong by grains and half-grains, till at last the balance is turned in the actual life and we are no more fit to be numbered with the visible saints of God.

Think again of this man's name. He is a "backslider," but what from? He is a man who knows the sweetness of the things of God and yet leaves off feeding upon them. He is one who has been favored to wait at the Lord's own table, and yet he deserts his honorable post, backslides from the things which he has known, and felt, and tasted, and handled, and rejoiced in—things that are the priceless gifts of God. He is a backslider from the condition in which he has enjoyed a heaven below; he is a backslider from the love of him who bought him with his blood; he slides back from the wounds of Christ, from the works of the Eternal Spirit, from the crown of life which hangs over his head, and from a familiar intercourse with God which angels might envy him. Had he not been so highly favored he could not have been so basely wicked. O fool and slow of heart to slide from wealth to poverty, from health to disease, from liberty to bondage, from light to darkness; from the love of God, from abiding in Christ, and from the fellowship of the Holy Ghost into lukewarmness, worldliness, and sin.

The text, however gives the man's name at greater length, "*The backslider in heart.*" Now the heart is the fountain

of evil. A man need not be a backslider in action to get the text fulfilled in him, he need only be a backslider in heart. All backsliding begins within, begins with the heart's growing lukewarm, begins with the love of Christ being less powerful in the soul. Perhaps you think that so long as backsliding is confined to the heart it does not matter much; but consider for a minute, and you will confess your error. If you went to your physician and said, "Sir, I feel a severe pain in my body," would you feel comforted if he replied "There is no local cause for your suffering, it arises entirely from disease of the heart"? Would you not be far more alarmed than before? A case is serious indeed when it involves the heart. The heart is hard to reach and difficult to understand, and moreover it is so powerful over the rest of the system, and has such power to injure all the members of the body, that a disease in the heart is an injury to a vital organ, a pollution of the springs of life. A wound there is a thousand wounds, a complicated wounding of all the members at a stroke. Look ye well then to your hearts, and pray, "O Lord cleanse thou the secret parts of our spirit and preserve us to thy eternal kingdom and glory!"

Now let us *read this man's history*—"he shall be filled with his own ways." From which it is clear that he falls into ways of his own. When he was in his right state he followed the Lord's ways, he delighted himself in the law of the Lord, and he gave him the desire of his heart; but now he has ways of his own, which he prefers to the ways of God. And what comes of this perverseness? Does he prosper? No; he is before long filled with his own ways; we will see what that means.

The first kind of fulness with his own ways is absorption in his carnal pursuits. He has not much time to spend upon religion; he has other things to attend to. If you speak to him of the deep things of God he is weary of you, and even of the daily necessaries of godliness he has no care to hear

much, except at service time. He has his business to see to, or he has to go out to a dinner party, or a few friends are coming to spend the evening : in any case, his answer to you is "I pray thee have me excused." Now, this pre-occupation with trifles is always mischievous, for when the soul is filled with chaff there is no room left for wheat ; when all your mind is taken up with frivolities, the weighty matters of eternity cannot enter. Many professed Christians spend far too much time in amusements, which they call recreation, but which, I fear, is far rather a redestruction than a recreation. The pleasures, cares, pursuits, and ambitions of the world swell in the heart when they once enter, and by-and-by they fill it completely. Like the young cuckoo in the sparrow's nest, worldliness grows and grows and tries its best to cast out the true owner of the heart. Whatever your soul is full of, if it be not full of Christ, it is an evil case.

Then backsliders generally proceed a stage further, and become full of their own ways by beginning to pride themselves upon their condition and to glory in their shame. Not that they really are satisfied at heart, on the contrary, they have a suspicion that things are not quite as they ought to be, and therefore they put on a bold front, and try to deceive themselves and others. It is rather dangerous to tell them of their faults, for they will not accept your rebuke, but will defend themselves, and even carry the war into your camp. They will say, "Ah, you are puritanical, strict, and straight-laced, and your manners and ways do mischief rather than good." They would not bring up their children as you do yours, so they say. Their mouths are very full because their hearts are empty, and they talk very loudly in defence of themselves, because their conscience has been making a great stir within them. They call sinful pleasure a little unbending of the bow, greed is prudence, covetousness is economy, and dishonesty is cleverness. It is dreadful to think that men who know better should attempt thus to

excuse themselves. Generally the warmest defender of a sinful practice is the man who has the most qualms of conscience about it. He himself knows that he is not living as he should, but he does not intend to cave in just yet, nor at all if he can help it. He is filled with his ways in a boasted self-content as to them.

Ere long this fulness reaches another stage, for if the backslider is a gracious man at all, he encounters chastisement, and that from a rod of his own making. A considerable time elapses before you can eat bread of your own growing: the ground must be ploughed and sown, and the wheat has to come up, to ripen and to be reaped, and threshed and ground in the mill, and the flour must be kneaded and baked in the oven; but the bread comes to the table and is eaten at last. Even so the backslider must eat of the fruit of his own ways. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Now look at the backslider reaping the fruit of his ways. He neglected prayer, and when he tries to pray he cannot; his powers of desire, emotion, faith, and entreaty have failed: he kneels awhile, but he cannot pray; the Spirit of supplications is grieved, and no longer helps his infirmities. He reaches down his Bible; he commences to read a chapter, but he has disregarded the word of God so long that he finds it to be more like a dead letter than a living voice, though it used to be a sweet book before he became a backslider. The minister, too, is altered; he used to hear him with delight; but now the poor preacher has lost all his early power, so the backslider thinks. Other people do not think so, the place is just as crowded, there are as many saints edified and sinners saved as before; but the wanderer in heart began criticising, and now he is entangled in the habit, and he criticises every thing, but never feeds upon the truth at all. Like a madman at table he puts his fork into the morsel and holds it up, looks at it, finds fault with it, and throws it on

the floor. Nor does he act better towards the saints in whose company he once delighted; they are dull society and he shuns them. Of all the things which bear upon his spiritual life he is weary, he has trifled with them, and now he cannot enjoy them. Hear him sing or rather sigh—

> "Thy saints are comforted, I know,
> And love thy house of prayer;
> I sometimes go where others go,
> But find no comfort there."

How can it be otherwise? He is drinking water out of his own cistern and eating the bread of which he sowed the corn some years ago. His ways have come home to him.

Chastisement also comes out of his conduct in other ways. He was very worldly and gave gay parties, and his girls have grown up and grieved him by their conduct. He himself went into sin, and now that his sons outdo his example, what can he say? Can he wonder at anything? Look at David's case. David fell into a gross sin, and soon Amnon his son rivalled him in iniquity. He murdered Uriah the Hittite, and Absalom murdered his brother Amnon. He rebelled against God, and lo, Absalom lifted up the standard of revolt against him. He disturbed the relationships of another man's family in a disgraceful manner, and behold his own family rent in pieces, and never restored to peace; so that even when he lay a-dying he had to say, "My house is not so with God." He was filled with his own ways; and it always will be so, even if the sin be forgotten. If you have sent forth a dove or a raven from the ark of your soul, it will come back to you just as you sent it out. May God save us from being backsliders lest the smooth current of our life should turn into a raging torrent of woe.

The fourth stage, blessed be God, is at length reached by gracious men and women, and what a mercy it is they ever do reach it! At last they become filled with their own ways

in another sense ; namely, satiated and dissatisfied, miserable and discontented. They sought the world and they gained it, but now it has lost all charm for them. They went after other lovers, but these deceivers have been false to them, and they wring their hands and say, "Oh that I could return to my first husband for it was far better with me then than now." Many have lived at a distance from Jesus Christ, but now they can bear it no longer ; they cannot be happy till they return. Hear them cry in the language of the fifty-first psalm, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ; and uphold me with thy free spirit." But I tell you they cannot get back very easily. It is hard to retrace your steps from backsliding, even if it be but a small measure of it ; but to get back from wanderings is hard indeed, much harder than going over the road the first time. I believe that if the mental sufferings of some returning backsliders could be written and faithfully published they would astound you, and be a more horrible story to read than all the torments of the Inquisition. What racks a man is stretched upon who has been unfaithful to his covenant with God ! What fires have burned within the souls of those men who have been untrue to Christ and his cause ! What dungeons, what grim and dark prisons under ground have saints of God lain in who have gone aside into By-path meadow instead of keeping to the king's highway. Their sighs and cries, for which after all they have learned to be thankful, are dolorous and terrible to listen to, and make us learn that he who sins must smart, and especially if he be a child of God, for the Lord has said of his people, "you only have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." Whoever may go unchastised, a child of God never shall : the Lord will let his adversaries do a thousand things and not punish them in this life, since he reserves vengeance for them in the life to come, but as for his own children, they cannot sin without being visited with stripes.

Beloved friends, let all go straight away to the cross at once for fear we should be backsliders—

> "Come, let us to the Lord our God
> With contrite hearts return;
> Our God is gracious, nor will leave
> The penitent to mourn."

Let us confess every degree and form of backsliding, every wandering of heart, every decline of love, every wavering of faith, every flagging of zeal, every dulness of desire, every failure of confidence. Behold the Lord says unto us, "Return;" therefore let us return. Even if we be not backsliders it will do us no hurt to come to the cross as penitents, indeed, it is well to abide there evermore. O Spirit of the living God, preserve us in believing penitence all our days.

II. I have but little time for the second part of my subject. Excuse me therefore if I do not attempt to go into it very deeply. As it is true of the backslider that he grows at last full of that which is within him and his wickedness, it is true also of THE CHRISTIAN that in pursuing the paths of righteousness and the way of faith, he becomes filled and contented too. That which grace has placed within him fills him in due time.

Here then we have the good man's name and history.

Notice first, *his name.* It is a very remarkable thing that as a backslider if you call out his name will not as a rule answer to it, even so a good man will not acknowledge the title here assigned him. Where is the good man? I know that every man here who is right before God will pass the question on, saying, "There is none good save One, that is God." The good man will also question my text and say, "I cannot feel satisfied with myself." No, dear friend, but mind you read the words aright. It does not say, "satisfied *with* himself," no truly good man ever was self-satisfied, and when any talk as if they are self-satisfied it is time to

doubt whether they know much about the matter. All the good men I have ever met with have always wanted to be better; they have longed for something higher than as yet they have reached. They would not own to it that they were satisfied, and they certainly were by no means satisfied with themselves. The text does not say that they are, but it says something that reads so much like it that care is needed. Now, if I should seem to say this morning that a good man looks within and is quite satisfied with what he finds there, please let me say at once, I mean nothing of the sort. I should like to say exactly what the text means, but I do not know quite whether I shall manage to do it, except you will help me by not misunderstanding me, even if there should be a strong temptation to do so. Here is the good man's history, he is "satisfied *from* himself," but first I must read his name again, though he does not own to it, what is he good for? He says, "good for nothing," but in truth he is good for much when the Lord uses him. Remember that he is good because the Lord has made him over again by the Holy Spirit. Is not that good which God makes? When he created nature at the first he said of all things that they were very good; how could they be otherwise, since he made them? So in the new creation a new heart and a right spirit are from God, and must be good. Where there is grace in the heart the grace is good and makes the heart good. A man who has the righteousness of Jesus, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is good in the sight of God.

A good man is on the side of good. If I were to ask, who is on the side of good? we would not pass on that question. No, we would step out and say "I am. I am not all I ought to be, or wish to be, but I am on the side of justice, truth, and holiness; I would live to promote goodness, and even die rather than become the advocate for evil." And what is the man who loves that which is good? Is he evil? I trow not. He who truly loves that which

is good must be in a measure good himself. Who is he that strives to be good, and groans and sighs over his failures, yea and rules his daily life by the laws of God? Is he not one of the world's best men? I trust without self-righteousness the grace of God has made some of us good in this sense, for what the Spirit of God has made is good, and if in Christ Jesus we are new creatures, we cannot contradict Solomon, nor criticize the Bible if it calls such persons good, though we dare not call ourselves good.

Now, a good man's history is this, "He is satisfied from himself."

That means first, that he is independent of outward circumstances. He does not derive satisfaction from his birth, or honors, or properties; but that which fills him with content is within himself. Our hymn puts it so truly—

"I need not go abroad for joys,
I have a feast at home,
My sighs are turned into songs,
My heart has ceased to roam.

Down from above the blessed Dove
Is come into my breast,
To witness thine eternal love
And give my spirit rest."

Other men must bring music from abroad if they have any, but in the gracious man's bosom there lives a little bird that sings sweetly to him. He has a flower in his own garden more sweet than any he could buy in the market or find in the king's palace. He may be poor, but still he would not change his estate in the kingdom of heaven for all the grandeur of the rich. His joy and peace are not even dependent upon the health of his body, he is often well in soul when sick as to his flesh; he is frequently full of pain and yet perfectly satisfied. He may carry about with him an incurable disease which he knows will shorten and

eventually end his life, but he does not look to this poor life for satisfaction, he carries that within him which creates immortal joy: the love of God shed abroad in his soul by the Holy Ghost yields a perfume sweeter than the flowers of Paradise. The fulfilment of the text is partly found in the fact that the good man is independent of his surroundings.

And he is also independent of the praise of others. The backslider keeps easy because the minister thinks well of him and Christian friends think well of him, but the genuine Christian who is living near to God thinks little of the verdict of men. What other people think of him is not his chief concern; he is sure that he is a child of God, he knows he can say, "Abba, Father," he glories that for him to live is Christ, and to die is gain, and therefore he does not need the approbation of others to buoy up his confidence. He runs alone, and does not need, like a weakly child, to be carried in arms. He knows whom he has believed, and his heart rests in Jesus; thus he is satisfied, not from other people and from their judgment, but "from himself."

Then, again, the Christian man is content with the well of upspringing water of life which the Lord has placed within him. There, my brethren, up on the everlasting hills is the divine reservoir of all-sufficient grace, and down here in our bosom is a spring which bubbles up unto everlasting life. It has been welling up in some of us these five-and-twenty years, but why is it so? The grand secret is that there is an unbroken connection between the little spring within the renewed breast and that vast unfathomed fount of God, and because of this the well-spring never fails; in summer and in winter it continues to flow. And now if you ask me if I am dissatisfied with the spring within my soul which is fed by the all-sufficiency of God, I reply, no, I am not. If you could by any possibility cut the connection between my soul and my Lord I should despair altogether, but as long as none can separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ

Jesus our Lord, I am satisfied and at rest. Like Naphtali we are "satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord."

Faith is in the good man's heart and he is satisfied with what faith brings him, for it conveys to him the perfect pardon of his sin. Faith brings him nearer to Christ. Faith brings him adoption into the family of God. Faith secures him conquest over temptation. Faith procures for him everything he requires. He finds that by believing he has all the blessings of the covenant daily to enjoy. Well may he be satisfied with such an enriching grace. The just shall live by faith.

In addition to faith, he has another filling grace called hope, which reveals to him the world to come, and gives him assurance that when he falls asleep he will sleep in Jesus, and that when he awakes he will arise in the likeness of Jesus. Hope delights him with the promise that his body shall rise, and that in his flesh he shall see God. This hope of his sets the pearly gates wide open before him, reveals the streets of gold, and makes him hear the music of the celestial harpers. Surely a man may well be satisfied with this.

The godly heart is also satisfied with what love brings him; for love though it seem but a gentle maid, is strong as a giant, and becomes in some respects the most potent of all the graces. Love first opens wide herself like the flowers in the sunshine, and drinks in the love of God, and then she joys in God and begins to sing :—

"I am so glad that Jesus loves me."

She loves Jesus, and there is such an interchange of delight between the love of her soul to Christ and the love of Christ to her, that heaven itself can scarce be sweeter. He who knew this deep mysterious love will be more than filled with it, he will need to be enlarged to hold the bliss which it creates. The love of Jesus is known, but yet it passeth knowledge. It fills the entire man, so that he has no room for the

idolatrous love of the creature, he is satisfied with himself, and asks no other joy.

Beloved, when the good man is enabled by divine grace to live in obedience to God, he must, as a necessary consequence, enjoy peace of mind. His hope is alone fixed on Jesus, but a life which evidences his possession of salvation casts many a sweet ingredient into his cup. He who takes the yoke of Christ upon him and learns of him finds rest unto his soul. When we keep his commandments we consciously enjoy his love, which we could not do if we walked in opposition to his will. To know that you have acted from a pure motive, to know that you have done the right is a grand means of full content. What matters the frown of foes or the prejudice of friends, if the testimony of a good conscience is heard within? We dare not rely upon our own works, neither have we had any desire or need to do so, for our Lord Jesus has saved us everlastingly; still, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

The Christian needs to maintain unbroken fellowship with Jesus, his Lord, if he would be good as a soldier of Christ, but if his communion be broken his satisfaction will depart. If Jesus be within we shall be satisfied from within, but not else; if our fellowship with him be kept up, and it may be from day to day, and month to month, and year to year (and why should it ever be snapped at all), then the satisfaction will continue, and the soul will continue to be full even to the brim with the bliss which God alone can give. If we are by the Holy Spirit made to be abundant in labor or patient in suffering, if, in a word, we resign ourselves fully up to God, we shall find a fulness of his grace placed within ourselves. An enemy compared some of us to cracked vessels, and we may humbly accept the description.

We do find it difficult to retain good things, they run away from our leaking pitchers; but I will tell how a cracked pitcher can be kept continually full. Put it in the bottom of an ever-flowing river, and it must be full. Even so though we are leaking and broken, if we abide in the love of Christ we shall be filled with his fulness. Such an experience is possible; we may be

> "Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,
> And lost in his immensity."

Then we shall be full, full to running over; as the Psalmist says "my cup runneth over." The man who walks in God's ways, obediently resting wholly upon Christ, looking for all his supplies to the great eternal deeps, that is the man who will be filled, filled with the very things which he has chosen for his own, filled with those things which are his daily delight and desire. Well may the faithful believer be filled, for he has eternity to fill him—The Lord has loved him with an everlasting love; there is the eternity past: "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my covenant shall not depart from thee"—there is the eternity to come. He has infinity, yea the infinite One himself, for the Father is his Father, the Son is his Saviour, the Spirit of God dwells within him—the Trinity may well fill the heart of man. The believer has omnipotence to fill him, for all power is given unto Christ, and of that power Christ will give to us according as we have need. Living in Christ and hanging upon him from day to day, beloved, we shall have a "peace of God which passeth all understanding to keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." May we enjoy this peace and magnify the name of the Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XII.

THE PRIEST DISPENSED WITH.

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."—1 John, v. 10.

IT is a part of the theory of Ritualism, that is to say, Anglicised Popery, that no man can know his sins forgiven unless he be assured thereof by a priest. They tell us that to know ourselves saved we must either have a revelation from heaven, which we may not expect, or we must wait till the day of judgment, or else some duly authorized "spiritual father" must pronounce us absolved; they cannot suppose any other method of being assured of forgiveness. That is the theory, and in practice it comes to this, that when anything troubles your conscience you must make a clean breast of it to this, so called, learned minister," *alias* parish priest, and tell him whatsoever things you have done, answering all questions he may choose to put to you, whether they be clean or whether they be unclean; and then he will give you absolution in the name of God, claiming to be—mark, I am not saying what they do not say, for I quote from one of the most popular of their manuals, entitled "Steps to the Altar,"—claiming, I say, to be "a trustee from God, and commissioned by him as his ministerial dep-

uty, to hear, and judge, and absolve." That is the theory, a very attractive one, too, to human nature, for man by nature is an idolator, that is to say, he desires something tangible, and visible, to revere and trust in. The old spirit which cried out in the wilderness, "Make us gods to go before us, for as for this Moses which brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what has become of him," is still alive, and craves for idols, and delights to find them either in the form of priests or sacraments. As for faith in the unseen, purely spiritual worship, and simple reliance upon the promise of God, these are not according to human nature, and wherever you discover them they are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Man's idolatry loves priestcraft, and therefore we should not be astonished if Ritualism were to become more and more popular, and subjugate the whole land. Confidence in priestly powers seems to afford the soul an easy way of coming to an anchorage. To come direct to Jesus with the whole heart needs thought, consideration, and heart work, but to confess to a priest and get his assurance of pardon is a method much less difficult, and less spiritual, and consequently more agreeable to human nature. What need of being born again from above when a little water will do it? What need of feeding upon Christ when bread and wine are the same thing? What need of the witness from above when every curate can assure you that you are pardoned? What need, I say, of the witness of the Holy Spirit, when every clerical person can pronounce you absolved?

I would in all kindness speak with those who are in bondage to this delusion, and suggest a few questions. You think it more easy to believe in a man appointed by God than to believe in Christ himself directly, but may there not be a doubt or two about the man? Is it not possible that he has not been rightly ordained, or that he himself when he speaks does not mean what he says; and remember, every-

thing depends upon his ordination and intention. Do you say, "Oh, but he is certificated by the church." But are there not grave questions as to the church? Can apostolical succession be proved? It is the idlest of romances. The church of Rome has struggled to prove her own descent from Peter, but fails at the very beginning, and we may be sure that the Anglican church is still more at sea. She calls the Nonconformists schismatics in reference to herself, but what is she in regard to the church of Rome? She has no apostolical succession, in the sense in which the expression is ecclesiastically used, and should be ashamed of setting up the fraudulent pretence. Her godly ministers have the same apostolical successor as all true servants of Christ have, and no more. No man has such a pedigree as to entitle him to represent the eternal God, and stand between the Father and men's souls; the claim is as gross an imposition as that of the fortune-teller, who pretends to prophecy. Hark ye, my friends, have ye no manliness? Does it seem to you, as it does to me, to be a monstrously degrading thing that you should prostrate yourselves before a man like yourselves, and believe that he can pronounce the pardon of your sins? This precious "Steps to the Altar" says "let the manner of your confession be in an humble posture, on your knees, as being made to God rather than man." Mark you this, you are to go down on your knees to the man whom the State appoints to superintend the religion of your parish. What is it but Brahminism, mis-labelled Christianity? The whole drift of the scheme is to elevate a clerical caste, and lay all the rest of mankind at their feet. This is the reverse of the religion of the New Testament, which says that all believers are a royal priesthood, made by the Lord Jesus kings and priests unto God? Is not Ritualism quite sure to grow into Popery, nay, is it not full-blown Popery already? Will it not once again reduce the world to slavery under an archpriest at Rome or Canterbury if it be allowed to have its way?

And what saith the Scriptures? "There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Why should we set up other mediators, and go to them for absolution, when our Lord Jesus receives all who come to him? See you in the New Testament any trace of such assumptions on the part of God's ministers? Does the gospel say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, *if absolved by a priest?*" That interpolation is foreign to the gospel. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" is the gospel according to the Scriptures: "confess to the priest and thou shalt be forgiven" is the gospel of the Vatican. Everywhere the Scripture calls man to come into personal contact with his reconciled God in Christ Jesus. The first resolution of the awakened sinner is, "I will arise and go unto my Father." It is not, "I will arise and go unto the authorized minister who stands between me and my Father;" it is not, "I will resort to sacraments and ceremonies;" but "I will go to my Father." In fact the whole object of the gospel is to bring us near to God in Christ Jesus, and to put down every interposing medium. He who rent the veil of the temple has ended this priestly business.

This morning my business is to show that there is no need of a certificate from any man as to our being forgiven, for "*he that believeth hath the witness within himself.*" He does not need a new revelation; he does not need to wait till the day of judgment: he is forgiven, and he knows it, and knows it infallibly too, by a witness which is within himself. Of that I shall speak, and may the Spirit of God help us to get at the real truth; yea, I would to God that all who hear me this day would believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have the witness of his salvation in themselves.

Let me, first of all, say a word or two about the way in which we are saved, the *modus operandi* of salvation, as we find it described in the Scriptures. Here it is in a nut-

shell. We have all broken God's law, and we are justly condemned on account of it. God in infinite mercy desiring to save the sons of men has given his Son Jesus to stand in the room, place, and stead of as many as believe in him. Jesus became the substitute of his people, and suffered in their stead, and for them the debt of punishment due to God was paid by Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary. All who believe in him are thereby cleared before the bar of divine justice. Now, the Lord having given his Son has revealed this great fact in his Word. Here it is in this inspired book—the full statement of it—to this effect, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and that whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life. This is God's testimony. We, who are here present, or at least the bulk of us, know that it is God's testimony, and all we have to do in order to realize the result of Christ's passion is simply to believe the testimony of God concerning it, and rest upon it. The argument runs thus: Christ saveth those who trust him; I trust him, and therefore I am saved. Jesus Christ suffered for the sins of his people; his people are known by their believing in him; I believe in him, and therefore he died for my sins, and my sins are blotted out. This is the summary of the transaction. God's testimony concerning his Son is at first believed, simply because God says so, and for no other reason; and then there grows up in the soul other evidence not necessary to faith, but very strengthening to it,—evidence which springs up in the soul as the result of faith, and is the witness referred to in our text—"He that believeth hath the witness in himself." There is no need for the intervention of any second or third party here; the man has trusted and tried the gospel for himself, and proved it to be true; what service can that gentleman in a long coat render to him? What more evidence can he bring with his Prayer-book or without

it? The matter is as clear as the sun, what need of his tallow-candles?

We shall try to answer three questions to-day by the aid of our text—*How come we to be believers?* secondly, *How know we that believers are saved?* and thirdly, *How know we that we are believers?*

I. How come we to be believers? Beloved friends, you know how faith arises in the heart from the human point of view. We hear the gospel, we accept it as the message of God, and we trust ourselves to it. So far it is our own work; and be it remembered that in every case faith is and must be the act of man. The Holy Spirit never believes for anybody. Each man must personally believe. We cannot be saved by the faith of another, even though that other were divine; each one of us must himself believe. But, having said that, let us remember that the Godward history of our believing is quite another thing, for true faith is always the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings us to perform the act of faith by which we are saved; and the process is after this manner, though varying in different individuals:—First, we are brought *attentively to listen* to the old, old story of the cross. We have heard it a great many times, perhaps, but now we hear with an opened ear, anxiously desiring to know the inner sense. While we are so listening, the word commends itself to us; it awes us by its majesty of holiness, it attracts us by its beauty of love, and we perceive that it is the Word of God. Thus faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Attentive hearers, earnestly listening, very seldom remain unbelievers long. The superficial hearer, who is satisfied to sit through a sermon but does not understand it, misses the blessing. The diligent reader of the Bible, reading it with prayer, is very unlikely to remain unsaved; before long the Spirit of God, who works through the Word, applies some portion or other of Holy Scripture

to the soul with power, and the man is brought to faith. We believe, then, not because a clerical person, or a crowd of clericals, assure us that the Bible is inspired, but because the Spirit of God, working with the word, commends it to our consciences and to our understandings, and therefore we believe. You will generally find that unbelievers do not read the Bible, and do not read the gospel, and how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? If they will not consider the gospel candidly, how can they expect to believe it?

Further, *the Holy Spirit is also pleased to make us conscious of our sinfulness*, our danger, and our inability, and this is a great way towards faith in Christ; for the great difficulty in believing in Jesus is that men believe in themselves; but when they discover that their lives which they thought commendable are censurable, and when they find out that their native strength is feebleness itself, they are then prepared to believe in God's salvation. When a man can no longer rely upon himself, he cries to the strong for strength. Thus the Spirit of God leads us to faith by driving us out of self-confidence.

Moreover, while attentively hearing, *we perceive the suitability of the gospel to our case.* We feel ourselves sinful, and rejoice that our great substitute bore our sin, and suffered on its account, and we say, "That substitution is full of hope to me; salvation by atonement is precisely what I desire; here can my conscience rest." We learn that Jesus came to cleanse our nature as well as to take away our guilt, and we say, "That also meets my need." Studying the great doctrine of the cross, it strikes us as being full of the wisdom and love of God, and as suitable for our case as bread is suitable for hunger, or water for thirst; and our moral instincts, by an inner witness which we cannot further describe, leap to the conclusion that this must be true, and therefore we believe it. You see, first,

we give an attentive hearing to the gospel, then we receive by the Spirit of God a consciousness of our need of it, and then we discover the suitability of it to meet our need; and by that process we are led onward to genuine faith in Christ.

There is but one more step, and that is, *we accept Jesus as set forth in the gospel,* and place all our trust in him. He is set forth as the Saviour of mankind, bringing life and peace to all who trust him. We hear a voice that saith, "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." We see the Saviour himself standing with out-stretched arms, and crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink;" and being assured of the freeness as before we were of the suitability of the atonement, we accept it: and thus we exercise the faith of God's elect. We have gone through a process which has divorced us from every other confidence, and brought us to rest on that which God hath set forth to be a propitiation, even the finished work, the blood and righteousness of Christ.

When the soul accepts the Lord Jesus as Saviour, she *believes in him as God:* for she saith, "How can he have offered so glorious an atonement had he not been divine? How could God set him forth to make propitiation for the sons of men had he not been equal to the task, a task requiring an infinite nature?" We worship the Son of God; in him we rest, and on him we lean, and we find in him all that we need. This is why we believe, then, and the process is a simple and logical one. The mysterious Spirit works us to faith, but the states of mind through which he brings us follow each other in a beautifully simple manner.

Now, in all this I see no room for the priest at all. For the preacher there is a niche, for "how can they hear without a preacher?" But the priest with his authority is an interpolation; like the fifth wheel of a steam-engine, he is of no possible service, and a good deal in the way. He

deserves to be called "a superfluity of naughtiness." God's word convinces my reason, and God's Spirit wins my heart to faith in Jesus, what under heaven do I need more as a reason for faith? That gentleman with the gown on has no more to do with the business than if he did not exist, and his intervention to tell me by authority that the gospel is true, and that I am absolved, is as ridiculous as the conduct of that little African potentate who, as soon as he has eaten the few morsels of carrion that adorn his majestic table, bids a herald proclaim east, west, north, and south, that all other kings in the world are now permitted by his gracious majesty to have their dinners. Probably they have never heard of the permission, and have suffered no evil from being ignorant of it. Who is this black fellow that he should take so much upon him? Having been brought to rest in Jesus as my Saviour by a perfectly reasonable process, by a chain of argument in which not one link is deficient, I care nothing whatever for any official confirmation from the gentleman in the gown, who has no argument, but bids me believe because he has been ordained. I need no confirmation of what God speaks. Twice two will be four whether the parish priest says so or not, and God's testimony is true quite independently of *all* the gowns and surplices in and out of the robe-maker's shop. If her Majesty should give me the title-deeds of an estate, signing the transfer with her own hand and seal, I should smile at the lackey who should kindly offer to add his authority to her Majesty's act and deed. Where the word of a king is there is power, and this is preëminently true where the word of the King of kings is concerned. I have believed in Jesus Christ as he is set forth on the authority of God himself, and who are you, Sir Priest, to come between me and God? You tell the penitent, "You are to look upon the priest, as he is trustee from God, and commissioned by him as his ministerial deputy, to hear and judge and absolve you." Away with such blas-

phemous falsehood; we want no deputies, for we have Christ himself. You and your authority may go packing.

II. Secondly, How KNOW WE THAT BELIEVERS ARE SAVED? for that seems to be a grave question with some. "I trust Jesus, I believe in him with all my heart, but am I saved?" My dear friend, you ought not to raise that question, for it is finally settled by divine authority: but as you do raise it let us answer it for you very briefly. We know and are sure that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is saved, because God says so, and is not that enough? *God declares in his word*, even in that sure word of testimony, whereunto ye do well to take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, that every believer in Jesus Christ is saved. The passages in which this is stated are far too many for us to quote them all; only let us note that memorable one at the close of Mark's gospel, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." The believer is saved, you have in those verses God's word for it. True, the believer is bound to profess his faith by baptism, which follows upon his faith; but the second sentence shows that the faith is the all-important matter, for it is added, "He that believeth not shall be damned;" faith being the vital thing which, if omitted, will involve damnation. How the whole of John's Gospel teems with this truth. Turn to the blessed third of John, and see how wondrously clear it is. In the sixteenth verse, for instance: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Read the eighteenth: "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Follow on to the thirty-sixth verse: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Can anything

be more plain and positive? Assuredly he that believes in Jesus is a saved man? Turn to the tenth chapter of Romans. I shall only give you passages in which the truth is as conspicuous as the sun in the heavens. Paul says in the fourth verse: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou wilt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved." He rejects all idea of salvation by works, and lays all the stress upon believing in a risen Saviour. To the like purpose speaks the apostle in Romans i. 16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." This indeed, is the great reason why the Bible is written, that we may believe on the Lord Jesus and have life through his name. So John tells us in the twentieth chapter of his gospel and the thirtieth verse. See ye not then, brethren, if you believe in Jesus you are saved certainly, and are ye not sure that it is so, because God declares it? If we from henceforth had no other witness, is not the witness of the Lord sufficient? It seems to me to be the essence of unbelief for a man to want a minister to tell him that if he believes he is saved, when God solemnly affirms that it is so. I could not conceive myself so forsaken of God as to

assume that I could assure my fellow man of his pardon, and affect to pronounce absolution by authority committed to me. Surely this were presumption to be answered for at the last great day. God forgive those who are guilty of it.

Again, we know on the authority of Scripture that believers are saved, because *the privileges which are ascribed to them prove that they are in a saved condition.* Let us read in John again. John goes to the very root of every matter, and in chapter i. 12 he tells us, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." See, brethren, every one that believes on the name of Jesus is a son of God, and how can a son of God be a lost soul? Will he cast away his own children? God forbid! In the same gospel, chapter v. 24, Christ himself tells us, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." He is gone out, then, of the region of death and condemnation into that of life and acceptance, and surely no one will say that such a man is not saved. Look at chapter vii. 38: "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive." So that the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer, and where the Holy Spirit abides salvation is certainly enjoyed. Our Lord also promises the resurrection to every believer. Read John xi. 25, that glorious passage, wherein Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Resurrection to eternal life is not the portion of the unsaved, for they "shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on them." You see that John's gospel is rich with this precious doctrine. Nor does he alone thus reveal the blessed

results of faith : Paul also speaks of these privileges in all his epistles. If you turn to the Romans, how full that epistle is of the same truth. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord : by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." You remember the passage we read just now in the Epistle of John : "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith," so that faith brings us victory from day to day, even as faith at the very outset brings us remission of sin, as the apostle tells us in the Acts x. 43. But I need not multiply proof texts, it would have required several sermons to sum up the privileges of believers, privileges quite inconsistent with the idea that a believer can be an unsaved man. You can find these for yourselves, for they are as plentiful in Scripture as ears of corn in harvest. Everywhere there are such privileges ascribed to believers as could not be ascribed to them if they were not saved souls.

Once again, the *whole tone of Scripture regards the believer as a saved man.* "Believers" is a common synonym for saints, for sanctified persons ; and truth to say the epistles are written to believers, for they are written to the churches, and churches are but assemblages of believers. The Lord looks upon men as divided into believers and unbelievers, and between these two there is a gulf of difference as great as that between the Israelites and the Egyptians in the day when the pillar gave light to Israel but darkness to the hosts of Egypt. Believest thou in Jesus ? Thou art in the favor of God. Dost thou not believe in him ? Then no priest can help thee, nor canst thou help thyself ; thou art lost and ruined and undone. The only way of escape is that thou believe in Jesus Christ.

Brethren, when the Word of God tells us so positively that having believed we are saved, can you see any earthly use in going to a person who says he is authorized of God,

and asking him whether you are saved or not? I cannot for one. I think it far easier by God's grace to believe in Jesus than to believe in these begowned and bedizened clerics: and to believe in Jesus and in them too is like seeing by the light of the sun aided by the lamp of the glow-worm. What can the little men be at? In the bad old times in the south a free negro was forced to carry his papers about with him, but in that blessed day when the Jubilee trumpet sounded, and every African throughout the States was free, I can hardly imagine some little squire or country judge saying to the emancipated negro, "Sam, I will make out papers for you, and for your consolation I will put my name 'Jeremiah Stiggins' at the bottom." Why, the emancipated negro would have said, "I have seen the proclamation which has the name of Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States, at its foot, and I do not care a button for your name or anybody else's." Having believed in the Lord Jesus, I have salvation upon the authority of the Word of God, and on the Holy Ghost's authority I know that there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, and therefore I would not thank an angel for his oath if he tendered it in confirmation. When the little man in the surplice comes to me and says, "I will give you a certificate that you are absolved;" I reply, "I am very much obliged to you, but there are softer heads than mine, and you had better exercise your arts upon them; you cannot excite in me any feeling but that of pity, bordering upon contempt." Before God the whole business is blasphemy, and before Christian men it is foolery and worse.

III. The last point is this, How do we know that we are believers? It is clear that if we are believers we are saved, but how do we know that we are believers?

First of all, as a general rule, *it is a matter of consciousness.* How do I know that I breathe? How do I know that I think? How do I know that I believe that there was once

a Saxon Heptarchy? I know I do, and that is enough. Faith is to a large extent a matter of consciousness. A man is not always alike conscious of what is true, for a man might be in such a weak condition that he might say, "I hardly know whether my heart beats," and yet it will be beating all the time. Doubts may arise, and will, but as a general rule faith is a matter of consciousness. I live, and if you ask me for proof I reply, "I know I do." I believe, and if you ask me how I know it I reply, "I am sure I do."

Still there is other evidence. How do I know that I am a believer? Why, by *the very remarkable change* which I underwent when I believed; for when a man believes in Jesus Christ there is such a change wrought in him that he must be aware of it. As in the case of the blind man when his eyes were opened he said, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." That poor woman who had the issue of blood so many years, when she touched Christ's garment and was healed, how did she know it? We read that she felt in herself that she was made whole. She had touched the hem of the Lord's garment, and was recovered, and in the same way the believer knows that he has believed. Suppose a child was born in a coal pit, and has seen no light except that of the candles down below, and that he is suddenly taken up the shaft to see the sun, and the green fields, and the sweet spring flowers. What a surprise! I cannot wonder if the child should think itself dreaming; but if you were to say to it, "Are you out of the coal pit? can you prove that you are?" why, notwithstanding that the child would hardly know where it was because of its vast surprise, yet would it be sure that it was out of the darkness, convinced by an argument within itself which nobody could refute. So do we know, brethren, that we are born again, for we feel a new life, and live in a new world. Things we never dreamed of before we have realized now. I remember one who when he was converted said, "Well,

either the world is new or else I am." This change is to us strong evidence that faith is in us, and has exercised its power.

Brethren, we have further evidence that we believe, for *our affections are so altered.* The believer can say that the things he once loved he now hates, and the things he hated he now loves; that which gave him pleasure now causes him pain, and things which were irksome and unpleasant have now become delightful to him. Especially is there a great change in us with respect to God. We said in our hearts, "No God." Not that we dared say, "There is no God;" but we wanted to get away from him; we would have been glad to hear that there was no God. How altered are our affections! Now our greatest joy is in God, the nearer we can approach to him the better, the very sound of his name is delicious music to us. Now, we know that this change was produced by our believing in him, of that we are confident for the matter is clear. A certain master had a servant whose mind was very much poisoned against him by slanderous tales. Everything the master did the servant misconstrued, because he considered him to be a tyrant and an oppressor. Now it came to pass that this servant one day learned more concerning his master, and found out that everything he had done was dictated by the most generous motives, and that his master indeed was one of the excellent of the earth. The moment that servant's thoughts of his master changed and he had faith in his goodness, he acted very differently, as you may well conceive; none could be more faithful and diligent than he. Now, we prove that we believe, because we feel towards God so very differently; he is loved in our inmost souls, and we delight to serve him. This would have been utterly impossible if we had not been changed in our feelings toward him by being led to trust him.

We know, also, that we believe because though very far from perfect *we love holiness and strive after purity.* You

that have believed in Jesus, do you not now pant after holiness? Do you not endeavor to do that which is right, and when you are conscious that you have failed does not conscience prick you? Have you not gone on your knees in bitterness of soul and said, "My God, help me and deliver me, for I delight in thy commandments; help me to keep thy statutes"? Right, and truth, and peace are the things you now seek after, whereas time was when these were of small account, and your own selfish pleasure, and your own perverted judgment, were the rule of your being. By this change of conduct we know that we have believed in Jesus Christ.

And my dear brothers and sisters, we know that we have believed in Jesus Christ because now *we have communion with God;* we are in the habit of speaking with God in prayer, and hearing the Lord speak with us when we read his word. Some of us have spoken with our Lord Jesus so often that we have grown to be near and dear friends, and whatsoever we ask in prayer he grants us. Answered prayers are sweet testimonies to faith. When the Lord is pleased to deliver us out of trouble, when his Holy Spirit cheers us in depression, when he helps us under difficulties; when he makes us patient under pain—all these things become proofs that we have real faith in him, since our faith has realized him and brought him near, taught us how to live upon him, and so strengthened us in his ways.

Once more only upon this point, and then we will come to the practical conclusion: we know that we have believed in the Lord Jesus because we have over and above all this a secret something, indescribable to others, but well-known by ourselves, which is called in Scripture *the witness of the Holy Spirit:* for it is written, "The Spirit himself also beareth witness with our spirit that we are born of God." First, our spirit bears witness to our new birth, and then the Spirit of God comes in and bears witness with our spirit to

the same effect. Do you know what it means? If you do not I cannot tell you. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." There comes stealing over the soul sometimes a peace, a joy, a perfect rest, a heavenly deliciousness, a supreme content, in which, though no voice is heard, yet are we conscious that there is rushing through our souls, like a strain of heaven's own music, the witness of the Spirit of God. We are sure of it, as sure as we are of our own being, and by that witness we know that we are indeed believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now mark, we may not ask for any witness to begin with beyond the testimony of God, nor will any other witness be given. I charge all of you here present not to say, "I will believe in God when I obtain the inward witness." No, you are bound to believe in God first, on the sure testimony of his word. If you believe his word you shall know the sweets of grace. To ask for more evidence first is as though a man should say, "Here is a medicine prepared by a physician of great repute, and it is said to be very powerful for driving out the disease from which I suffer: I will take it as soon as I see that I am improving by its means." The man has lost his reason, has he not? He cannot expect even a partial cure till he has taken the medicine. He cannot expect the result to come before the cause. You must take the good Physician's medicine as a matter of faith, and afterwards your faith will be increased by the beneficial result. You must believe on the Lord Jesus, because of the witness of God concerning him, for that is all the witness you ought to wish for, and all that God will give you. After you have believed other witnesses will spring up in your soul, as the results of faith, and so your confidence will be strengthened; but just now, beloved, believe in Jesus Christ, and having believed in him you shall know that you are forgiven for his name's sake.

In closing, let me ask every person here, do you believe

in Jesus Christ or no? If thou believest thou art saved; if thou believest not thou art condemned already, because thou hast not believed. Remember that.

Let me next ask, are any of you seeking after any witness beyond the witness of God? If you are, do you not know that virtually you are making God a liar? For if God says such and such a thing is true, and you seek any further evidence beyond his word, you do in effect say that God's witness is not sufficient, and that God is false. I pray you behave not so insolently. Accept his naked word, for it is surer than the sight of the eye or the hearing of the ears. Behold how the arch of heaven stands without a single pillar, vast as it is: what sustains it but the word of God? See how this round world hangs on nothing, and yet starts not from her sphere: what maintains her in her course but the bare word of God? That word which rolls the stars along, and has never failed to fulfil its purpose, is that on which you are asked to lean. Sinner, will you believe your God? If you will, you shall be established, and blessed, and enriched; but if you still say he is a liar then shall you be as the heathen in the desert which shall not see when good cometh, but suffereth perpetual drought. If you rest in Jesus, trusting him, you have done well, but yet you have only done him justice. There is no merit in believing what is true, who but a man of base heart would refuse to do so? To believe One who cannot lie is by no means a meritorious action, and hence salvation is by faith that it may be by grace; yet faith will bring to you life, love, joy, peace, immortality, and all that heaven can mean.

May God grant you grace to believe; but I pray you do not let the little man in robes stand between you and Christ. Let no one do so. I charge you, never regard anything I say as having any authority in it apart from the word of God. I reckon it of all crimes the greatest for a man to assume to mediate between men and God.

Little as I respect the devil I prefer him to a priest who pretends to forgive sins; for even the devil has too much honesty about him to pretend to give absolution in God's name. There is but one pardoning priest, and he is the Son of the Highest. His one sacrifice has ended all other sacrifices; his one atonement has rendered all future oblations an imposture. To-day as Elias stood on Carmel and cried out against the priests of Baal, so would I. I count no words too severe. If my every speech should be a thunderbolt and every word a lightning flash, it would not be too strong to protest against the accursed system which once degraded the whole earth to kiss the Pope's foot, and is degrading our nation still, and that through a so-called Protestant church. O, God Almighty, thou God of Latimer and Ridley, God of the martyrs, whose ashes are still among us, wilt thou suffer this people to go back again to false gods and saints and saintesses, and virgins, and crucifixes, relics, and cast clouts and rotten rags; for to this also will they come if thy grace prevent not. Oh, my hearers, Jesus is the only Saviour of the sons of men. Believe in him and live. This is the only gospel: at your peril reject it. I pray you receive it for Christ's sake.

SERMON XIII.

THE SACRED LOVE-TOKEN.

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the blood shall be to you for a token."—Exodus xii. 13.

YOU remember that last Sabbath morning we spoke upon the witness within the child of God. We tried to show that believers did not need any man to assure them that they are forgiven, that they could get on exceedingly well without absolution from a priest, and could know their salvation altogether apart from the ghostly father, seeing that they have the evidence of it in their own souls by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall not think or speak much of that miserable impostor, the priest, this morning, for he really is not worth thinking of, but we shall continue our consideration of the witness which the Lord has given to his believing people concerning their safety in Jesus Christ. May the Holy Spirit help us while we meditate upon the most vital of all subjects, which lies at the very heart of true religion.

There are some, as we have said, who desire a token of their safety from man, a poor thing when they get it, and not worth asking for; and there are others who desire it from God in the form of a sign or a wonder, or else they

will not believe. "Show me a token for good" is a prayer which is often used in a very mistaken sense. They desire some special transaction of providence, or remarkable dream, or singular feeling; but God says to all those who desire a token for good, "The blood shall be to you for a token." What more can we desire? All the squadrons of the angelic host could not better assure us if each one brought a message from heaven. The best of all evidences of divine love is the cross. The strongest of all assurances of safety, the surest of all pledges of favor, the best token of grace that a man can behold is the sprinkled blood, by which he is cleansed from sin. "The blood shall be to you for a token."

Before we dive into this subject, let us notice that the blood which was a token to God's people was not merely that which had been shed by the sacrifice of an unblemished lamb, but blood which had been caught in a basin, had been taken by the person at the head of the household in his own hand, and recognized as shed for him. Then the bunch of hyssop was laid asoak in the basin, and afterwards the blood was sprinkled upon the lintel and the door-posts; this blood thus appropriated was the token. By an appropriating faith we must take Christ to be ours; we must, in a word, believe in the atonement which he has made, for an atonement which is not believed in is no atonement to us. Our Lord Jesus laid down his life for us, but he that believeth not in him shall by no means partake of any of the blessings of his death.

The *sprinkled* blood preserved the houses of the Israelites; and it is the blood of Jesus accepted by us, relied upon, and applied to our consciences which delivers us from death. This sprinkling, moreover, was done in a very public manner; they stained the lintel and the two side posts, so that every passer-by might see it, yea, and must see it. So salvation is premised not alone to believing, but to confession with the mouth. "He that with his heart believeth, and

with his mouth maketh confession of him shall be saved;" and so the grand commission at the end of the gospel by Mark puts it, not "he that believeth shall be saved," but "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" for if we believe in Christ we must not be ashamed of him. Shame about faith would argue insincerity of faith. True faith in the Saviour is so potent a principle of our lives that it must be seen whether we publish it or no, and we must be willing that it should be seen: yea, this should be the most visible point in our lives, our glory and our delight, that we do indeed believe in the Saviour Jesus Christ. Oh that every one of you, my dear hearers, used the cross for its proper purpose! I grieve that any among you should need to have it asked of you—

> "Is it nothing to you, oh you that pass by,
> Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?"

The lamb is slain but you have never caught the blood, you have never sprinkled it with the hyssop of faith, and consequently you are not saved. Oh that each one of you could say, "My faith *is* resting in the substitutionary work of Jesus." I could, indeed, sing that blessed hymn just now, and I drank it in with all my heart, and I heartily wish you could all sing it too—

> "Complete atonement thou hast made,
> And to the utmost farthing paid
> Whate'er thy people owed;
> Nor can his wrath on me take place,
> If shelter'd in thy righteousness,
> And sprinkled with thy blood?"

Now, to the text. The blood of Jesus Christ is to Christians a token, and in order to bring out the whole sense we must have five words: it is *a distinguishing token, an assuring token, a significant token, a love token,* and *a recognition token.*

I. First, then, the blood shall be to you for a token, A

DISTINGUISHING TOKEN. You could tell where the Israelites dwelt, for the blood mark was there that night; you knew the Egyptian's abode, for he knew nothing of the token. Nothing so truly distinguishes a genuine Christian as the blood of Jesus Christ. Where the blood is not believed in nor prized there you have dead Christianity, for "the blood is the life thereof." A bloodless gospel is a lifeless gospel: if the atonement be denied or frittered away, or put into a secondary place, or obscured, in that proportion the life has gone out of the religion which is professed. But we, brethren, bear this distinguishing token, the mark of the blood. Our religion is, in many respects, a very singular one—one open to a world of objection and ridicule from carnal minds; one which always has been criticised, and always will be: for we believe, first, that *our sin deserves death.* We do not believe transgression to be a trifle, or a mere misdemeanor of the first class, but we know it to be a capital offence, deserving the death penalty. When the Lord saith, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," our conscience says "Amen" to the sentence of the Most High. The blood on the door-post meant that those who dwelt there confessed that they deserved to die as much as others, and would have done so had it not been for the paschal lamb. The crimson mark was virtually a confession of the desert of death. So every believer feels that his sin is great and grievous, terrible and overwhelming. He does not subscribe to theories which make little of man's guilt. He has no ear for those who try to mitigate the penalty, and endeavor to make the guilt appear small. He does not call sin a mistake, a failure, a lapse. I think I have heard all those words lately used about sin, by those who say, "Poor unhappy man! so mistaken, seeking after the light and crying after God in the dark; how sad that he should stumble! Surely God will not be so harsh as to punish him forever." Such talk has no charm for us; we own the heinous criminality of

sin, and the justice of the awful sentence which declares that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment. Our God is just, and taketh vengeance on iniquity. The God who smote all the first-born of Egypt, and overthrew Pharaoh in the Red Sea, is the God whom we adore; and as we bow before him we own that he might righteously have smitten us also, and have utterly destroyed us. For us the blood mark is virtually an acknowledgment that we have the sentence of death in ourselves, and dare not trust in ourselves.

We are singular enough to believe in *substitution.* The blood upon the lintel said, "Some one has died here instead of us." We also hold and rest in this truth, that Christ died, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." We believe that "he was made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." The belief in the greatness of sin distinguishes Christians from Pharisees, and all other self-justiciaries; and the belief in substitution separates Christians from all those philosophic adulterators of the gospel who are willing to hold up Christ's example, but cannot endure his expiatory sacrifice, who will speak to you of Christ's spirit and the power of his teaching but reject his vicarious death. We do not subscribe to the lax theology which teaches that the Lord Jesus did something or other which, in some way or other, is, in some degree or other, connected with the salvation of men: we hold as vital truths that he stood in his people's stead, and from them endured a death which honored the justice of God, and satisfied his righteous laws. We firmly believe that he bore the penalty due to sin, or that which from the excellence of his person, was fully equivalent thereto. My brethren, this is and always will be assailed, but it is the keystone of the gospel arch. As at Waterloo all the battle seemed to rage around the chateau of Hugoumont, so does the conflict centre around the doctrine of the atoning death of our great Substitute: but we are not going to shift our ground for

a moment, nor to adopt any other phraseology. We stand to the literal substitution of Jesus Christ in the place of his people, and his real endurance of suffering and death in their stead, and from this distinct and definite ground we will not move an inch. Even the term "*the blood,*" from which some shrink with the affectation of great delicacy, we shall not cease to use, whoever may take offence at it, for it brings out that fundamental truth which is the power of God unto salvation. We dwell beneath the blood mark, and rejoice that Jesus for us poured out his soul unto death when he bare the sin of many.

But we believe more, and what will seem very strange to some,—we believe that *we died in Jesus.* The Israelite knew that when the angel went through Egypt he meant to exact a life at every house, and so he exhibited the blood, as much as to say, "The firstborn is dead here." The lamb has died instead of the firstborn, and virtually the firstborn is dead, and there is no cause for smiting, because the smiting has been done. So, when Jesus died his chosen died in him, and their sins received the vengeance due in that day when on the accursed tree he yielded up his life a ransom for many. How can we die? We are dead in him already, and have been buried with him by virtue of our union with his blessed person. This is a most precious truth and those who hold it are thereby distinguished from the rest of mankind.

Believing this, we next come to the conclusion that *we are safe,* for when the Hebrew had struck the blood upon the door-posts of his house, he *went in to feast, not to fret,*—he went into the house to eat the lamb whose blood had been sprinkled, and to stand at the table with his loins girt about, expecting not to die, but to go forth to a land which the Lord his God would give to him. This is the distinguishing mark of a Christian, that he knows himself to be saved, and therefore he keeps the feast, rejoicing in the Lord, and, standing with his loins girt, expecting soon to be called

to the land which the Lord his God has given to him, that he may inherit and dwell therein forever. Other men are not saved, nor dare they profess that they are. They own that they have a great deal to do before they will be saved, present salvation they know not; or if they think they are saved, yet they dream that their continuance therein depends upon themselves, there is something wanted still beside the sprinkled blood. The Israelite wanted nothing but the blood, he was perfectly satisfied with that, and so is the believer: he has believed in Christ as dying in his stead, he is delighted to know that he is complete in him and accepted in the beloved, and he waits till the summons shall come, and he shall be called to ascend to the glory land, whither Christ has gone to prepare a place for him.

The Israelite in Egypt made this distinction prominent. As we have already said, he put it upon the upper part of his door and upon the two side-posts too. We read in the Revelation that those who received the mark of the beast sometimes bore it in their forehead, but sometimes also in their right hand: while he who had the mark of God always received it in his forehead, never in his right hand, where it could be hidden within the palm. It has been very well remarked that there is a back door to hell, but there is none to heaven. The way to heaven is the king's highway, a way which is not made for concealment, but for honest travellers who have nothing to hide. Believers must be seen for they are the lights of the world; yet there are some who try to go to heaven up the back stairs, and serve the Lord only by night. It must not be. Strike the blood where all can see it, and let men know that you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice: whether they like it or no, let them know that this is all your salvation and all your desire. I had the pleasure of riding into the Leonine city in Rome a short time after the Italian troops had taken possession, and I noticed that every

house had marked up most conspicuously the arms of the kingdom of Italy and the name of Victor Emmanuel. They were not content to have it over their doors, but all over the fronts of the houses you read "Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy," showing that they were right glad to escape from the dominion of the Pope, and to avow their allegiance to a constitutional king. Surely if for a human monarch and the earthly freedom which he brought men could thus set up his escutcheon everywhere, you and I who believe in Jesus are bound to exhibit the blood-red token, and to keep it always conspicuous. Let others believe the priest, we believe Jesus. Let others trust their works, we trust the sprinkled blood. Let others rely on frames and feelings, discipline and development, we believe in Jesus Christ and him only; and we nail to the mast the blood-red banner of atoning sacrifice.

"My faith is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

Thus much, then, upon the blood as the *distinguishing token.*

II. Now, secondly, the blood was an ASSURING TOKEN. When we mean to do a special kindness for a friend it may be we say to him, "That you may be sure I shall do it, here is a token of my faithfulness." God gave to his people the blood of sprinkling, as the token that he would preserve them safely; and surely, the more the Israelite studied that token the more at ease would he be, for he would say, "God has appointed this lamb unblemished to be in our stead, and seeing that he appointed it, and the lamb has been slain, we are sure he will not run back from the substitution which he has himself ordained, and we are perfectly safe." Now, I want you just for a few minutes, especially you who have any doubts or fears, to look upon the blood of Christ and

see its suitableness to be an assuring token to your consciences. Remember, first, what it was,—the blood, *the token of suffering.* Your sin deserves suffering; Christ has suffered for sin. Think what suffering he endured, what contradiction of sinners, and what forsaking of his Father. Suffer no one to depreciate the physical sufferings of Christ, but still remember that his mental sufferings were greater; his soul sufferings were the soul of his sufferings. Go to dark Gethsemane, go to shameful Gabbatha, go to deadly Golgotha, and as you see your Lord and mark that wondrous spectacle of woe, will you not feel that he can put away your sin, and that if he so terribly suffered you need not suffer? God has accepted an expiation worthy of his justice; that heaven-rending cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" shows how keen were the pangs with which our hope was born.

Think further, blood signifies not only suffering but *death,* for our Lord could only put away sin by actually dying; all his tears, all his holy living, all his painful sufferings even, could not recompense for sin till the death penalty was paid, for death was that which God had appointed as the reward of sin, and Jesus died. Oh see him die,—see HIM die! Was ever such a spectacle? Every drop that distils from his pierced hand cries aloud, "Safety for the believer! The ransom price is paid." The gash in his side, like the mouth of love, speaks eloquently to our hearts, "Pardon, acceptance, love eternal!" I cannot see that bowed head, and those eyes glazed in death, and that dear body taken down to be laid in the tomb without feeling, "If Christ has died there must be boundless mercy for the guilty sons of men." Think of it, and I pray God the Holy Spirit to lead you to see the sweetness and comfort which lie in this token.

Remember, too, that you rest, not merely on suffering and death, but on the excellence of the person so suffering

and dying. Ask *whose suffering and death is it?* In the Israelites' case it was an unblemished lamb; in your case and mine it is the spotless Lamb of God. Oh, brethren, think of the life of Jesus in its innocence and disinterestedness. Was ever such a life, was ever such a death of such a sacred person? But he was God, "very God of very God." Those hands that were pierced had healed the sick with their touch, and those nailed feet had trod the sea! Those eyes all closed in death had looked into men's hearts, and those silent lips had spoken miracles. It was God himself who on the bloody tree offered expiation for sin against himself. There must be power in such a death as that to put away sin. Do ye not own that it must be so? Is not the token full of comfort to you?

Think again that it was not merely the lamb, but it was *the Lamb of God.* That is to say, when the Israelite killed the lamb he was doing what God commanded him to do, and when Jesus died in our stead, he did not die as an amateur Saviour, but as one *appointed by God.* Now, if God appointed the atonement he must accept it. Surely if *he* said that Christ should die in our stead, if *he* "laid upon him the iniquity of us all," then the atonement must be accepted since God himself set it forth, provided it, and ordained it. How sweetly do I rest in this. I feel when I look up to my dear Lord, and I desire evermore to do so, as if I could say to the justice of God, "What canst thou urge against me? Do I not present to thee all thou canst demand—a death? I bring before thee a death which thou didst appoint to be instead of my death? If thou hast appointed it, I know thou wilt not refuse it." This is one of the sweetest parts of the whole matter of atonement, and fills the token with assurance.

One other thought, and a sweet one, this token was that of *blood which was shed:* not to be shed, but shed already. They had killed the lamb, they had taken the warm blood in

the basin, and smeared the door-posts, it was *all done* and all over: you and I also are resting in a finished sacrifice, not in a sacrifice to be offered, nor in a sacrifice which continues to be offered, according to this Anglican Popery which reeks in so many parish churches, but a sacrifice complete, for "by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are set apart." There is no continuance of the offering of Christ in the sacrifice of the mass, it is a barefaced lie before Almighty God, for Christ declares that, when he had once offered himself, he forever sat down at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. By that word "It is finished!" he has put an end to all sacrifices and offerings by way of expiation for sin, because they are not wanted, one death has accomplished it all. Beloved, what joy is here? Suffering, suffering to the death, the suffering of the Son of God, a suffering ordained of God to be the vicarious sacrifice, and a suffering which is perfect and complete! Let us look at the token, and let our hearts be glad within us henceforth and forever. One of our kings once gave a ring to his favorite, and said to him, "I know that at the council to-morrow a charge of heresy will be brought against you; but, when you come in, answer them if you will, but you need be in no fear: if you find yourself brought to a strait, simply show them the ring, and they will go no further." It is even so with us; the Lord has given us the precious blood of Christ to be like a ruby ring upon our finger, and now we know how far conscience may go, and how far accusations from Satan may go; we have only to produce that token and bar all further proceedings. "He that believeth in him is not condemned," neither can he be. God cannot and will not go back from his promise, the blood is the faithful assurance of the security of all the saints.

III. But now, thirdly, this is A MOST SIGNIFICANT TOKEN. Tokens generally mean something; some inner sense is implied in them. Now, our token of the blood means four

things. When the Jew struck the blood upon the lintel and the side-posts he meant *redemption;* he did as good as say, "We are redeemed by blood, the people who live in this house are free, they have been slaves but they are redeemed, and they are going out to-morrow morning, and old Pharaoh and all his army cannot hold them." That is just what the blood of Jesus Christ means to us. We are bought and paid for, and we are a free people, and if the Son has made us free we are free indeed. "O Lord, I am thy servant, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds." Thou hast brought me up out of the house of bondage, and out of the iron furnace, and broken all my chains—the sprinkled blood declares it.

Then the blood meant next that the people who lived beneath that sign *belonged to God.* It was the mark of the Lord's property: "ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." He who redeemed us ought to possess us. The blood when it bought us also set us apart to be forever the property of the Redeemer. Whenever you think of Jesus crucified think of yourself also as crucified to the world, as no more belonging to self or sin or Satan; no longer bound by worldly customs, fashions, maxims, laws, but under law to Christ, for you are the Lord's freeman. Give up the members of your body to his service, yield them as servants unto righteousness, because you have been purchased, spirit, soul, and body, not with corruptible things as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot. The token set forth our redemption, and also God's property in us.

This token next means *acceptance.* He who has the blood of Christ sprinkled on him has that to show which renders him acceptable before the Lord. There has been a war, and a wounded soldier comes home, and he goes to the house of a father and mother who have a son out in the army, and he inquires, "Does so-and-so live here?" "Yes." "Can I

see him?" "Yes." "I have a letter from your son, whom I left in the army, he was my dear comrade." "Are you sure you have such a letter?" The man looks disreputable, and his garments are torn, and he is evidently very poor, but he replies, "Yes, I have a letter from your son." He puts his hands into his pockets, and he cannot find it. The master of the house is angry, and says, "It is of no use your coming here with this tale, you are deceiving me." He fumbles still in his pockets, and at last he brings it out. Yes, there is the token, the father knows the handwriting of his dear boy. The letter says, "Father, this is a choice companion of mine, and I want you, when he reaches home, to treat him kindly for my sake. Tell mother that anything she does for him shall be the same as if she had done it to her own boy." See you how well he is received at sight of that token, and even so when we present the blood-mark, we say to the Lord, "There is the token that we are Jesus' friends," and the Lord does not look at the rags in which our poor nature is arrayed, but he looks at the token of his own Son's blood and accepts us for his sake. What surer and more suggestive token could we desire? When cleansed in the blood of Jesus we are comely with his comeliness, and dear to the heart of God for his Son's sake.

Yes, beloved, it moreover means *perfect safety.* As soon as ever the blood was on the lintel those inside the house were perfectly secure; the angel could not strike them, for if he had done so he would have struck his Master, and insulted the Lord of angels. To use his sword while the divine shield was exhibited outside the door would have been to bid defiance to God's honor, and that no angel of God would ever do. Oh, brethren, there is no shield for a guilty soul like the blood-red shield of the atonement. Stand beneath the purple canopy of sacrifice, and the great hail-stones of wrath can never fall upon you, you must be safe if Christ's atonement interposes between you and God. So you

see the sprinkled blood is a very significant token. As I went awhile ago through a piece of forest much overgrown with underwood and saplings, I noticed certain straight young trees distinguished by a red mark, and I discovered that the woodmen were about to cut down all the underwood and clear the ground for the better growth of the timber, and these marked trees were to be spared to become large oaks. I can see the red marks and the small trees in my mind's eye at this moment, and there come the woodmen chopping down everything with their axes and billhooks. Down goes all the brushwood, and many a pole falls too, but they stop at the marked trees, these must not be touched, the red mark saves them. So it is with you and with me if we have known the sprinkling of the blood, the Lord will not only say, "Let them alone this year also," but he will say to the destroyers, "Come not nigh unto those upon whom is the mark." By this token you may know that you shall live and not die. Like Rahab, we hang this scarlet line in our window, and when all Jericho goes down with terrible destruction our house must stand, for the red line secures it evermore.

IV. The fourth point is that THE BLOOD IS A LOVE TOKEN. The blood is a token of *ancient love*, for it was shed eighteen hundred years and more ago. Oh my soul, the Lord has given thee an ancient token which sets forth his great love wherewith he loved thee, even when thou wast dead in trespasses and sins. Before thou wast born the blood was poured forth, which is to-day the ensign and pledge of everlasting love.

It is a token of *intense love*, for it is a pledge taken from the heart of Christ, and it denotes not the love of the lip, not love which begins and ends with outward deeds of mercy, but a love which wells up from the essence of the Redeemer's being, from his inmost heart, which was reached by the cruel spear. What a token is this, a token taken not from the lilies of my Lord's garden, nor from the jewels of his crown, nor even from the hair of his head, but drawn from the

inner sanctuary of his soul, from that Holy of Holies, the heart of Emanuel, God with us. Oh believer, since thou hast such a token as this thou shouldst be ready to die sooner than doubt the love of the Lord.

It is a token, too, of *mighty love*, for it testifies that he who gave it possessed a conquering flame of love, which many waters could not quench nor death itself destroy. See, he gives you the blood which is the token of death, his death for you, and thus shows that he went to the grave for your sake, "and death by dying slew." Wear this token next your heart, I pray you, for it is the richest that was ever given by the hand of love to the choicest object of affection. O thou who art Well-beloved, thou hast loved us even to the end, for thou hast loved us to the death.

It is a token, too, of a wise all-seeing love, for it shows that our Lord knows our sin, and has met it all. When he gives us the blood he does as much as declare, "My child, I am aware of the evil which is in thee, for I have suffered its penalty; I know thy sin, but thou shalt know it no more, for I have carried it away, and cast it into the depths of the sea." By this token believers know that their sin is covered, and that in the sight of the Lord they are "all fair," for he has cleansed them from every stain. The day is come when if their sin was searched for it shall not be found, yea, it shall not so much as exist, for the blood has washed them white.

And it is the token of *a love unlimited* which will deny nothing to its object. "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" If you have received the blood of his dear Son, what will the Lord refuse you? Do you think your God will deny you providential mercies when he has already given the bleeding heart of Jesus to redeem you? Do you imagine that he will leave you without bread and water, or garments to cover your backs, when he has yielded up the jewel of his soul, the delight of his

heart, to you? Prize the token of his love, and look at it till your soul weeps for very joy. Blessed is that man to whom the Lord has said, "The blood shall be to you for a token."

V. Lastly, it is A TOKEN OF RECOGNITION. The man who has this token is known to *the angels* as one of the heirs of salvation to whom they minister. As soon as they see the blood applied to the soul by faith, there is joy among them, for this is a sure sign of repentance. All God's children have this family mark at their birth, and there is no mistaking it, so that at the sight of it the angelic guardians commence their tender care, and begin to bear up the newly begotten one in their hands lest at any time he dash his foot against a stone. *The devil* also knows that mark, and, as soon as he sees it, he begins to assail the man who bears it, seeking in all sorts of ways to destroy him. If the believer be not destroyed, it will not be for lack of enmity or industry on the devil's part. He knows the mark of the "seed of the woman," and he roars and rages, but at the same time he trembles, for well he knows that he cannot prevail. At the sight of the sacrificial token the great enemy stands confounded; like a raging lion he would fain devour the sheep of the Lord, but the mark of the blood upon them saves them from his teeth.

And, brethren, this blood-mark is known among *the saints* themselves, and has a wonderful power for creating and fostering mutual love. I have often noticed that as soon as we begin to discourse upon the atoning death of our divine Lord, we are at home with one another. There may be brethren present from various churches, and they may not be well at ease when we handle other subjects, but when we come to the precious blood we come to the heart of the matter, and are all at one. This is one of the secret signs of our spiritual freemasonry. I have had my heart warmed and cheered against my own will sometimes by devout writers, whose

doctrinal theories I do not believe, and whose church I could not join, and yet when they write about my Lord they win my heart. "*Aliquid Christi,*" as one old divine used to say: the *something of Christ* in them awakens our affections and draws us nigh. Even books which are corrupt with sacramentarianism have occasionally such a sweet savor of Christ in them that we cannot utterly cast them away, but feel bound very carefully to pare the apple, and cut out the rotten places, and remove the objectionable core, for the sake of the sweet morsels flavored with the love of Christ. As the sweet honey-bearing flowers attract the bees, so does the name of Jesus draw all his saints to him, and so to each other. Give me your hand, my brother, if you also know my Lord we belong to the same family, the infallible mark of the redeemed is upon us both.

Best of all, *the Lord* knows this token too. When we go to the mercy-seat, if we would prosper we must produce the sacred passport of the precious blood. With this it is impossible to fail. The Primitive Methodist brother when he was in a meeting where a friend could not pray, cried out, "Plead the blood, brother!" and the advice was wise. Ay, plead you that, and say, "For Jesus' sake: by his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion." What mighty blows are given to the gate of heaven by that battering-ram. These are arguments to which heaven always yields.

Our God recognizes the blood-mark in the hour of death, and attends his people through the solemn article. Death's terrors are gone to him who has the blood for a token. Lay me down on my bed! There let me endure the allotted pain and weakness, till the clammy sweat stands on my brow, and needs to be constantly wiped away: lay me down, I say, and I will calmly fall asleep like a child tired with a day's play, if I have but the token. Distresses and poverty and anguish of body may molest me, yet shall I be perfectly at ease, and ask for no exchange. Whence is this? Many a man pos-

sessed of health and wealth is not one-half so blessed as the poor saint upon his death pallet. Whence comes this blessedness? Here is the secret. The Lord has passed by, and given a token. "A token," say you, "what is it? Is it some line extracted from the golden book of God's election? Is it a gem taken from the diadem which is prepared for him in heaven?" No, no, it is not this. "Has he in his sleep beheld a vision and seen the shining ones walking the golden streets, or has he heard an audible celestial voice saying to him, "Thou art mine?" No, he has none of these, he has neither dream nor vision nor anything that men can call superhuman, but he is resting in the precious blood, and this blood is the token of friendship between God and his soul; by this he knows the love of God, and by this God communes with him. They meet at the blood. God delights in the sacrifice of Christ, and the believing soul delights in it too; they have thus a common love and a common joy, and this has bound the two together by a bond which can never be broken. This it is which makes some of us sing—

"And when I'm to die,
Receive me, I'll cry,
For Jesus has loved me,
I cannot tell why;
But this thing I find,
We two are so joined,
He won't be in heaven
And leave me behind."

Oh what a blessing to feel that the blood of Jesus has united us to him eternally.

Suffer this last word. Some of you perhaps have said, "Oh, I wish I had the blood of Jesus Christ for a token." Then let me tell you first that you have not to provide a sacrifice, for that is done, the lamb is slain, the blood of the everlasting is ever before the presence of God. What have

you to do? You have nothing to do but to have the blood sprinkled upon you. You know how they sprinkled it, it was with a bunch of hyssop. Hyssop is a common herb to be found everywhere in and around eastern cities, growing even on walls where but little soil is found. It was a plant with a great many stalks, so that it would hold the blood and act as a sort of brush; indeed, its only excellence was its power to hold the blood. Now, faith is a very simple thing, and it is the act not of refined and educated minds only, but of the poorest and simplest. The efficacy of the hyssop did not lie in what the hyssop was, but in its being put into the basin to drink up the blood. My poor faith is just as common as a bit of hyssop pulled up from the wall, but then I lay it asoak in the atonement; while I muse upon who Jesus was, and what he suffered, and for what purpose, till it is wet, saturated, all becrimsoned with the vital flood. The hyssop was an insignificant item in the whole business, it is only mentioned once, the second time the sprinkling is commanded it is not mentioned at all; and so after all faith is but the humble instrument of salvation; the blood is the main matter, it is the life, the shelter, the token, the everything. Let your trembling faith lay asoak in the precious blood and then say, "I believe thee, Jesus, and I tell the world I do believe thee. Sinner as I am, thy precious blood was shed for me, and I trust in thee alone." Thus you crimson the lintel and the door-posts. Let all men know that whatever you may have been, and whatever you now are, you do now believe in the substitutionary death of Jesus, oppose you who may. Witness, ye men and angels and devils, that Jesus' blood is our sole hope. He who thus believes is saved. Brother, go your way, and leap for joy. No man ever perished who from his heart rested in the atoning blood. God bless you. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

THE LION-SLAYER—THE GIANT-KILLER.

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, the Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."—1 Samuel, xvii. 36, 37.

WE have all thought a great deal of the courage of David in meeting giant Goliath, but probably we have not given him credit for his conduct in a previous contest. We have not sufficiently noticed that immediately before the encounter with the Philistine he fought a battle which cost him far more thought, prudence, and patience. The word-battle in which he had to engage with his brothers and with king Saul, was a more trying ordeal to him than going forth in the strength of the Lord to smite the uncircumcised boaster. Many a man meets with more trouble from his friends than from his enemies; and when he has learned to overcome the depressing influence of prudent friends, he makes short work of the opposition of avowed adversaries.

Observe that David had first to contend with his own brothers. I hardly think Eliab was so much swayed by envy as has been supposed. I fancy that Eliab had too much

contempt for his young brother to envy him; he thought it ridiculous that a youth so given to music and piety and gentle pursuits should dream of encountering a giant. He derided the idea of his being equal to such a task, and only feared lest in a moment of foolish enthusiasm he might throw his life away in the mad enterprise; and therefore Eliab somewhat superciliously, but still somewhat in the spirit natural to an elder brother who feels himself a sort of guardian to the younger members of the house, chided him and told him that only pride and curiosity had brought him there at all, and that he had better have remained with his sheep in the wilderness. Such a youth he thought was fitter among lambs than among warriors, and more likely to be in his place beneath a tree with his shepherd's pipe than in the midst of a battle. David met this charge in the very wisest way: he answered with a few soft words, and then turned away. He did not continue to argue, for in such a contest to multiply words is to increase ill feeling, and he who is first silent is the conqueror. Grandly did this young man restrain himself, though the provocation was very severe, and herein he won the honors of the man who restrains his spirit, and he is greater than a soldier who takes a city. I admire David as he selects his five smooth stones from the brook, and I admire him quite as much when he so gently replies where others might have been angry, and then so wisely turns aside from a debate which could not have been to the profit of either party.

Next, he is brought before Saul, and David enters upon a contest with a king, to whom he felt loyal respect, and with a soldier who had been a man of war from his youth up, and had wrought many famous deeds, one, therefore, to whom David looked up with not a little reverence. When king Saul said to him, "Thou art not able to fight with this Philistine, for thou art but a youth and he a man of war from his youth," it must have been difficult for the

young hero to cope with the weighty judgment; and yet he did so, answering meekly, forcibly, and in all respects well. Did you notice how David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him." He did not say, "Let not *thy heart fail thee*;" he was too much of a courtier for that, he had too much delicacy of mind to insinuate that a royal heart could fear. When he proceeded to argue with the king it was in the most polite and deferential manner. He begins, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep;" he calls himself a servant of the king, and does not hesitate to own that he is only a shepherd who had no flock of his own, but served under his father. There was nothing like assumption, but the very reverse. Yet while he used soft words he brought forth hard arguments; he mentioned facts, and these are always the best weapons against carnal reasoning. Saul said, "Thou art not able to meet this Philistine;" but David replied, "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear." He placed facts against mere opinions, and won the day. He did not quote Scripture to the king, for I suppose he knew Saul too well for that, and felt that he had not grace enough to be swayed by the promises and examples of Holy Writ: but he brought facts before him, knowing well how to give a reason for the hope that was in him with meekness and fear. His arguments quite overcame the opposition of Saul, which would have damped the enthusiasm of many, and Saul not only commissioned him to go and fight the Philistine, saying, "Go, and the Lord be with thee;" but he actually clothed him in his royal armor, which was of no small value, and which of course would have increased the honors of the Philistine champion had David fallen before him. Some little faith in David was kindled in Saul's bosom, and he was willing to trust his armor in his hands. Thus it is clear that David fought the battle with Saul as admirably as he afterwards conducted his duel with the giant, and he deserves no small honor for it; nay,

ather unto God be honor who while he taught his servant's ands to war, and his fingers to fight, also taught his tongue o utter right words, by which he put to silence those who ould have abashed him.

What was the pith of David's argument? What were he five smooth stones which he threw at the head of carnal easoning? That shall be the subject of this morning's iscourse. We will consider the way in which David argued own all doubts and fears, and by the Spirit of God was erved to go forth to do deeds of sacred daring in the name f the Most High, for the same conquering arguments may, erhaps, serve our turn also.

Three things are before us in the text, *recollections, reasonings*, and *results*.

I. First, RECOLLECTIONS. "*Thy servant kept his father's heep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out f the flock: and I went after him, and smote him, and delivred it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I aught him by his beard and smote him, and slew him. Thy ervant slew both the lion and the bear.*" These were noteworthy facts which David had stored up in his memory, and e now mentions them, for they exactly answered his purose. We ought not to be unmindful of the way by which the ord our God has led us, for if we are we shall lose much. ome saints have very short memories. It has been well aid that we write our benefits in dust and our injuries in arble, and it is equally true that we generally inscribe our fflictions upon brass, while the records of the deliverances f God are written in water. It ought not so to be. If our emories were more tenacious of the merciful visitations of ur God, our faith would often be strengthened in times of rial. Now, what did David recollect, for I want you to emember the same?

He recollected, first, that whatever his present trial might e, *he had been tried before*, tried when he was but a young

man, peacefully employed in keeping his flocks. A lion rushed upon his prey and he had to defend his sheep;—no small trial that for a young man, to have to meet a savage beast, strong, furious, and probably ravenous with hunger. Yet the ordeal had not destroyed him, and he felt sure that another of the same kind would not do so. He had encountered that danger in the course of his duty, when he was in his proper place, and engaged in his lawful calling, and he had thereby learned that the path of duty is not without its difficulties and perils. He was keeping his flock as he ought to be, and yet a lion attacked him; and so you and I have met with trials which did not arise from sin, but, on the other hand, came to us because we conscientiously did the right, and would not yield to temptation. We must not think that we are out of the right road when we meet with difficulties, for we must expect through much tribulation to inherit the kingdom of God. Severe afflictions and afflictions arising out of holy walking are not new things to us, let us now remember our old encounters.

He remembered, too, that *he had been tried frequently.* He had been not only attacked by a lion, but also by a bear. He had been tried in different ways, for lions and bears do not fight exactly in the same manner, neither are they to be met with precisely the same tactics. David remembered that his trials had been of different sorts, and that in each case the battle had been hard. It was no small matter to fight hand to hand with a lion, and no child's play to rush single-handed upon a bear. We, also, in looking back, remember sharp encounters with foes of many kinds, which were terrible battles to us at the time. Brethren, some of us who have been for years in the ways of the Lord can tell of shrewd brushes with the enemy, and we can speak of wounds and ugly rents, of which we wear the scars to this day. Many have been our adversaries and furious, yet have we been upheld till now by Jesus, the Captain of our salva-

tion. Wherefore, then, should we fear concerning the present fiery trial, as though some strange thing had happened to us. Is it a Philistine this time? Well, it was a lion before, and a bear on another occasion: it is only a little change of the same constant trial of our faith, and therefore let us not shrink from the conflict.

Next, David recollected that *he had risked all in the prosecution of his duty.* He was set to take care of the sheep and the lambs, and he did so. A lion had dared to leap into the fold and seize a lamb, and without a single thought of anything but the lamb and his own duty, the young shepherd rushed upon the monster with all the ardor of youth, and smiting him with his crook compelled him to drop his prey. He had put his own life in jeopardy for the poor defenceless lamb. Can you not recollect, my Christian brethren, when you also took no thought as to what you should lose if you followed Christ, and cared not if it cost you your very life? With earnest honesty you desired to learn what you ought to do, and you did it, careless of the cost. Reproach, slander, misrepresentations, and unkindness you defied, so long as you could but clear your conscience and honor your Lord. O blessed recklessness! Do you remember those early days when you could cheerfully have gone to prison and to death for Christ's sake? For Scriptural doctrines, and ordinances you would willingly have suffered martyrdom. Perhaps some of you have on more than one occasion actually risked everything for the sake of integrity and for the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, even as others have defied the utmost power of Satan, and the most virulent hatred of men for the sake of the Lord God of Hosts. You have felt that you could sooner die than deny the truth, and sooner perish from off the face of the earth than be craven to the trust which the Lord had committed to you. Look back upon your brave days, my brethren, not that you may be proud of what you did, but that you may be ashamed if you are afraid

to do the like again. Blush if what you could do as a stripling should appear too hard for you in riper years. These recollections have precious uses; they will lead us to bless God and humble ourselves in his presence.

Next he remembered that *he had on that occasion gone alone to the fray.* The antagonist was a lion, and a dozen men might have found themselves too few for the fight; but David remembered that in that contest he was quite alone: he had not called in the under shepherds to the rescue, but armed only with his crook, he had belabored the lion till the monster found it convenient to leave his prey and turn upon the young shepherd. David was ready for him, seized him by his beard, dashed his head upon the rocks, and did not relinquish his grasp till the king of beasts lay dead at his feet. It was a grand incident, even had it stood alone, but a bear had supplied an equally memorable trophy. Some of us may well recall hours in our past lives when we were all alone, and, as we went forth to serve the Lord Jesus, our enterprise was regarded as Utopian and spoken of as sure to end in failure. Many a good man has gone forth for Christ's sake even worse than alone, for those who should have aided have done their best to criticise and prophesy disaster; but men whom God ordains to honor have shut their ears to critics, pushed on till they have reached success, and then everybody has said, "We always thought so," and not a few have even claimed to have been ardent admirers all along. Brother, do you remember when every one said you were foolhardy and self-sufficient, and regarded your course as absurd and sure to come to an end? Six months were to see the end of your career, which was a mere bubble and would soon collapse? Ah, those were brave times when the Lord was with you and man's opinion weighed but lightly. It may be that for truth's sake your relatives turned their backs upon you, and no man would say a good word, and yet in the name of the Lord God of Hosts you did the right and

dared all results, and you have had no cause to regret it, but overflowing reason to bless God alone. Look back at that courageous hour, and now that you are surrounded by a goodly company of friends, think whether you have as simple a trust in God *now* as you manifested then. If you judge that you have, prove by your actions that you still dare to go forward under difficulties, unshackled by dependence on an arm of flesh. The discipline of desertion ought not to have been lost upon you, you ought to be all the stronger for having been compelled to walk alone. The friendship of your fellows has been a loss rather than a gain if you cannot now wage single-handed battle as you did in former times. Are you now become slavishly dependent on an arm of flesh? If so, chide yourself by the memory of braver days.

David also recollected that on that occasion when he smote the lion and the bear *he had nothing visible to rely upon, but simply trusted his God.* He had in his hand no sharp weapon of iron with which to smite the wild beast to the heart, but careless as to weapons, he thought only of his God, and rushed on the foe. He was as yet a young man, his muscles were not set and strong, neither did he seem fit for such a venturous deed: but his God was almighty, and, reliant upon the omnipotence of God, he thought nothing of his youth, but flung himself into the fray. What more in the way of help did he need, since God was with him? Oh, brethren, there were times with some of us when we commenced our work, when our sole reliance was the unseen Lord. We were cast upon the invisible power of God, and if that could fail us we must go. Our attempts were such as carnal reason could not justify, such indeed as only divine interposition could carry through. They were right enough if the divine power could be calculated on, but apart from that they were well nigh insane. Glory be to God, he has been as good as his word, our faith has been justified by results, and unbelief has been struck dumb.

The Lord taught us to rest in him from our youth up, and to declare his wondrous works, and now that we have tried and proved his faithfulness we dare not hide these things from the generation following. Our witness must be borne even though we should be charged with boasting. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." But can it be true that now we have begun coolly to calculate means and to rely upon methods and plans, whereas once we looked to God alone? Do we now trust in this friend and rely on that, and distrust the Lord if friends are few? Shame upon us if we do so, for this is to leave the way of victory for the path of defeat, to come down from the heroic track to the common highway of carnal reasoning, and so to fall into care, fretfulness, weakness, and dishonor. Happy is the man who trusts in the Lord alone by unstaggering faith, he shall go from strength to strength, but he who chooses to walk by sight shall utterly decay.

David recollected also that *the tactics which he adopted on that occasion were natural, artless, and vigorous.* All that he did was just to smite the lion and the bear with his staff, or whatever came first to hand, and then to fight as nature and the occasion suggested. He did what his courage prompted, without waiting to consult a committee of lion-slayers and bear-trappers. His whole art was faith; this was his science and his skill. He consulted not with flesh and blood, followed no precedents, imitated no noted hunters, and encumbered himself with no rules, but he did his best as his faith in God directed him. He threw his whole soul into the conflict, and fought vigorously, for his faith did not make him sit still, and expect the lion to die in a fit, or the bear to become insensible. He seemed to say to himself, "Now, David, if anything is to be done, you must be all here, and every muscle you have must be put to the strain. You have a lion to fight with, therefore stir up your strength, and while you rely upon God alone, take care to

play the man this day for your father's flock." Courage supplied coolness; and energy, backed up by confidence, won the day. Do you remember, my brother, when in your own way you did the same? You were reliant upon God but not idle, you put your whole force of soul and energy into your Master's service, as if it all rested on you, and yet you depended wholly on him; and you succeeded! How is it with you now? Do you now take things easily? Do you wonder that you do not succeed? If you are growing cold and careless, if you are getting sleepy and dull, rebuke your soul, and use your past *experience* as a whip wherewith to flog yourself into energy. Let it never be said that he who woke himself up to fight a lion now falls asleep in the presence of a Philistine.

David remembered *that by confidence in God his energetic fighting gained the victory*—the lion was killed, and the bear was killed too. And cannot you remember, brethren, what victories God gave you? When you were little in Israel and despised, yet his hand was upon you, and when few would bid you God speed, yet the Jehovah of Hosts encouraged your heart, and when you were feeble and but a youth, the Lord Jesus helped you to do exploits for him in your own way. Remember this, and be of good courage this morning in the conflict which now lies before you. David talked of his former deeds somewhat reluctantly. I do not know that he had ever spoken of them before, and he did so on this occasion with the sole motive of glorifying God, and that he might be allowed to repeat them. He wished for permission from Saul to confront the Philistine champion, and bring yet greater glory to God. Brethren, whenever you talk of what God enabled you to do, mind you lay the stress upon God's enablings, and not upon your own doings; and when you rehearse the story of your early days, let it not be as a reason why you should now be exonerated from service, and be allowed to retire upon your laurels, but

as an argument why you should now be allowed the most arduous and dangerous post in the battle. Let the past be a stepping-stone to something higher, an incentive to nobler enterprise. On, on ye soldiers of the cross, in God's name eclipse your former selves. As grace enabled you to pile the carcass of the bear upon the corpse of the lion, so now resolve that the Philistine shall increase the heap, and his head shall crown the whole, to the honor and glory of the God of Israel. So much for recollections. I pity the man who has none of them, and I pity yet more the man who having them is now afraid to risk all for his Lord.

II. Now for REASONINGS. David used an argument in which no flaw can be found. He said, "The case of this Philistine is a parallel one to that of the lion. If I act in the same manner by faith in God with this giant as I did with the lion, God is the same, and therefore the result will be the same." That seems to me to be very clear reasoning, and I bid you adopt it. Such and such was my past difficulty, and my present trouble is of the same order; in that past trial I rested upon God, and acted in a right way, and he delivered me; therefore, if I trust in God still, and do as before, he is the same as ever, and I shall triumph yet again.

Let us now consider the case, and we shall see that it really was parallel. There was the flock, defenceless; here was Israel, God's flock, defenceless too, with no one to take up its cause. In all the camp there was not one single man who dared take up the foeman's challenge. David was a shepherd, and, therefore, as a shepherd, bound to defend his flock; and in the present instance he remembered, I doubt not, that Samuel had anointed him to be king over Israel, and he felt that some of the responsibility of the anointing rested upon him even then, and that if no man else would play the shepherd the anointed son of Jesse must do it, and so it looked to him like a parallel case—Israel the flock, and he the shepherd who must defend it.

He was alone that day when he smote the lion, and so he was this day when he was to confront his enormous foe. Of course it was one of the conditions of a duel that the Israelitish champion should go forth alone, and, besides that, there was no one in all the camp who was likely to wish to accompany him upon such an errand. So, now that he was all alone, the case was the more truly parallel.

As for that Philistine, he felt that in him he had an antagonist of the old sort. It was brute force before, it was brute force now: it might take the shape of a lion or a bear or a Philistine, but David considered that it was only so much flesh and bone and muscle, so much brag or roar, tooth or spear. He considered the Philistine to be only a wild animal of another shape, because he was not in covenant with God, and dared to put himself in opposition to the Most High. My brethren, a man who has God for a friend is higher than an angel, but a man who is God's enemy is no better than a beast: reckon him so and your fears of him will vanish. Goliath was mighty, but so was the lion; he was cunning of fence, but so was the bear; the case was only a repetition of the former combat. And as God was not with the lion, nor with the bear, so David felt that God was not with Goliath, and could not be, for he was the enemy of God's Israel; and as God had been with him when fighting the wild beasts, so he felt that God was with him now. It looked to him as if he had already twice gone through a rehearsal of all this when he was in the wilderness alone, and therefore he could the more easily go through it now. Perhaps there flashed on his mind the case of Samson, who learned to slay the Philistines by rending a lion when he was alone in the vineyard. So David felt, "I have killed my lion like Samson, and now like Samson I go to fight this Philistine, or a thousand like him, if need be, in the name of the Lord of hosts."

The whole argument is this, in the one case by such

tactics we have been successful trusting in God, and therefore in a similar case we have only to do the same, and we shall realize the same victory. Brethren and sisters, here is a fault with most of us, that when we look back upon past deliverances we do not draw this parallel, but on the contrary the temptation haunts us, to think that our present trial is clearly a new case. For instance, David might have said, "When I slew that lion I was younger than I am now, and I had more courage and vivacity, but those shrewd brushes have strained me somewhat, and I had better be more prudent." Just as you and I say sometimes, "Ah, what I did was done when I was a young man, I cannot do the like now. That trouble which I bore so patiently, by God's grace, was in other times, but this affliction has come upon me when I am less able to endure it, for I have not the elasticity of spirit which once I had, nor the vigor I formerly possessed." When we want to escape from some arduous work, we do it by trying to show that we are not under the same obligations as in former days. We know in our conscience that if we did great things when we were young we ought to do greater things now that we are older, wiser, more experienced, and more trained in war, but we try to argue our conscience into silence. If the Lord helped us to bear with patience, or to labor with zeal, after all the experience we have had, that patience and zeal should now be easier to us than before. Alas, we do not argue so, but to our shame we excuse ourselves and live ingloriously.

I know a man who to-day says, "Yes, what we did in years gone by we did in our heroic age, but we are not so enthusiastic now." And why not? We are so apt to magnify our former selves, and think of our early deeds as of something to be wondered at, but not to be attempted now. Fools that we are! They were little enough in all conscience, and ought to be outdone. Oh, dear brethren, this resting on our oars will not do, we are drifting down with

the tide. David did not say, "I slew a lion and a bear, I have had my turn at such bouts, let somebody else go and fight that Philistine;" yet we have heard people say, "When I was a young man I taught in the Sunday-school, I used to go out preaching in the villages, and so on." Oh, brother, and why not do it now? Methinks you ought to be doing more instead of less. As God gives you more knowledge, more experience, and more grace, surely your labors for him ought to be more abundant than they used to be; but, alas, you do not look on it as a parallel case, and so make excuses for yourself.

Too often in our spiritual work we fix our mind upon the differences rather than upon the similarities. For instance, David might have said, I would not mind another lion, I can manage lions; I would not be afraid of half-a-dozen more bears, I am used to bears; but this Philistine is a new sort of monster." No, David saw it was the same thing after all, a little difference in shape but the same brute force, and so he went at it with courage. But *we* say, "Alas, there is a great difference; our present trials have an unusual bitterness in them." "I," cries the widow, "I lost my husband, and God helped me, and my son has been a stay to me; but now he too is gone, and I have no other son, and no one to fall back upon." She points out the difference, though the trouble is virtually the same; would it not be far better if she pleaded the same promise and believed in the Lord as she did before. One man will say, "Ah, yes, I did on such an occasion run all risks for God, but you see there is a difference here." I know there is, my dear brother, there is a little difference, and if you fix your eye on that you will drill yourself into unbelief; but difference or no difference, where duty calls or danger, be never wanting there; and if you should be called to bear such an affliction as never befell mortal man before, yet remember God's arm is not shortened that he cannot deliver his servants, and you have but to com-

mit yourself to him, and out of the sevenfold adversity you shall come forth a sevenfold conqueror.

We are very apt, too, to look back upon the past and say, "I know that there are some grand things the Lord did for me, and my venture for his sake turned out well, but I do not know what I should have done if a happy circumstance had not occurred to help me just in the nick of time." We dare to attribute our deliverance to some very "happy accident." It is very base of us to do so, for it was the Lord who helped us from first to last, and the happy occurrence was a mere second cause; but cannot God give us another "happy accident" if necessary in this present trouble? Alas, unbelief says "There was a circumstance in that case which really did alter it, and I cannot expect anything like that to occur now." Oh, how wrong this is of us! How we lose the force of that blessed reasoning from parallels which might have supplied us with courage! God grant that we may break loose from this net.

Possibly our coward heart suggests "Perhaps after all this deed of courage may not be quite my calling, and I had better not attempt it." David might have said, "I am a shepherd, and I can fight with lions, but I was never trained to war, and therefore I had better let this Philistine alone." He might also have discovered that he was better adapted for protecting sheep than for becoming the champion of a nation. We must guard against the use of this plausible pretext, for pretext it is. Brethren, if we have achieved success by the power of God, let us not dote upon some supposed adaptation, but stand prepared to be used of the Lord in any other way which he may choose. Adaptation is unknown till the event proves it, and our Lord is a far better judge of that than we are. If you see before you a work by means of which you can glorify God and bless the church, do not hesitate, but enter upon it in reliance upon your God. Do not stand stuttering and stammering and

talking about qualifications, and so on, but what your hand findeth to do, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, who has bought you with his blood. Prove your qualifications by bringing Goliath's head back with you, and no further questions will be asked by any one, or by yourself.

So, too, sometimes we frame an excuse out of the opinions of others. We are apt to feel that we really must consider what other people say. Our good brother Eliab may be a little crusty in temper, but still he is a man of a good deal of prudence and experience, and he tells us to be quiet and let these things alone, and perhaps we had better do so. And there is Saul; well, he is a man of great acquaintance with such matters, and he judges that we had better decline the task, and therefore upon the whole we had better exhibit that prudence which is the better part of valor, and not rush upon certain danger and probable destruction. This seeking advice and following cowardly counsel is all too common. We know that some strenuous effort is needed, and it is in our power, but we desire ease, and therefore we employ other men to weave excuses for us. It would be honester to say outright that we do not want to do any more. Were we more full of love to Jesus, this unworthy device would be scorned by us, and in sacred manliness of mind we should scorn the counsel which tendeth to cowardice. Others cannot bear our responsibility, we must each one give an account of himself unto God, why, then, yield to the judgments of men? Oh, brethren, fling this folly to the winds. Obey the dictates of the Holy Spirit, and close your ears to the advice of unbelief.

Men or women, consecrated to God, if the Lord impels you to do anything for him do not ask *me*, do not ask my fellow church officers, but go and do it. If God has helped you in the past, draw a parallel, and argue from it that he will help you in the present. Go, and the Lord go with

you, but do not fall a prey to that wicked unbelief which would rob you of your strength.

III. The last thing is RESULTS.

The results were, first, that David felt he would, as he did before, *rely upon God alone.* Come ye to the same resolution, brothers and sisters. God alone is the source of power, he alone can render real aid ; let us then rest in him, even if no other help appear. Is not the Lord alone enough ? That arm which you cannot see will never be palsied, its sinews will never crack, but all the arms of mortals upon which you so much love to lean must one day turn to dust in the tomb ; and while they live they are but weakness itself. Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. David had found wisdom's self when he said, "My soul wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him."

David resolved again *to run all risks once more,* as he had before. As he had ventured himself against the lion so he would put his life in his hand and engage the Philistine. Come wounds and maiming, come piercing spear or cutting sword, come death itself amid the taunts and exultations of his giant foe, he would still dare everything for Israel's sake and for God's sake. Soldiers of the cross, if you feel that you can do this, be not slow to put it in practice, throw yourselves wholly into the Lord's service, consecrate yourselves, your substance, and all to the grand end of glorifying Christ, fighting against error, and plucking souls from destruction.

David's next step was *to put himself into the same condition as on former occasions,* by divesting himself of everything that hampered him. He had fought the lion with nature's weapons, and so would he meet the Philistine. Off went that glittering royal helmet, which no doubt made his head ache with its weight. Off went the cumbersome armor, in which he found it very hard to move. In such a metallic

prison he did not feel like David a bit, and therefore he put all aside, and wore only his shepherd's frock. As for that magnificent sword which he had just strapped by his side, he felt that it would be more ornament than use, and so he laid it aside with the rest of the trappings, and put on his wallet, and took nothing with him but his sling and stone. This was the old style, and he did well to keep to it, for the Lord saveth not with sword and spear. We are all too apt to get into fine harness and tie ourselves up with rules and methods. The art of getting rid of all hamper is a noble one, but few have learned it. Look at our churches, look at the church at large, is there not enough red tape about to strangle a nation? Have we not committees enough to sink a ship with their weight? As for patrons, presidents, vice-presidents, and secretaries, had not Christianity been divine it could not have lived under the load of these personages who sit on her bosom. The roundabouts are worrying straightforward action out of the world. We are organized into strait waistcoats. The vessel of the church has such an awful lot of tophamper that I wonder how she can be navigated at all; and if a tempest were to come on she would have to cut herself free from nearly all of it. When shall we get at the work? If there should ever come a day when brethren will go forth preaching the gospel, simply resting in faith upon the Lord alone, I for one expect to see grand results; but at present Saul's armor is everywhere. When we get rid of formality in preaching we shall see great results; but the churches are locked up in irons which they call armor. Why, dear me, if we are to have a special service, one brother must have it conducted on the Moody method, and another can only have Sankey hymns. Who, then, are we that we must follow others? Do not talk to us about innovations, and all that; away with your rubbish! Let us serve God with all our hearts, and preach Jesus Christ to sinners with our whole souls, and

the mode is of no consequence. To preach down priestcraft and error, and do it in the simplest possible manner, by preaching up Christ, is the way of wisdom. We must preach, not after the manner of doctors of divinity, but after the manner of those unlearned and ignorant men in the olden time who had been with Jesus, and learned of him. Brethren, some of you have too much armor on. Put it off: be simple, be natural, be artless, be plain-spoken, be trustful in the living God, and you will succeed. Less of the artificer's brass, and more of heaven-anointed manhood is wanted: more sanctified naturalness, and less of studied artificialness. O Lord, send us this, for Christ's sake. Amen.

The ultimate result was, that the young champion came back with Goliath's head in his hand, and equally sure triumphs await every one of you if you rely on the Lord, and act in simple earnestness. If for Christ, my sister, you will go forward in his work, resting upon him, you shall see souls converted by your instrumentality. If, my brother, you will but venture everything for Christ's glory, and depend alone on him, what men call fanaticism shall be considered by God to be only sacred consecration, and he will send you the reward which he always gives to a full, thorough, simple, unselfish faith in himself.

If the result of my preaching this sermon should be to stir up half a dozen workers to some venturesome zeal for God, I shall greatly rejoice. I remember when I commenced this work in London, God being with me, I said if he would only give me half a dozen good men and women a work would be done, but that if I had half a dozen thousand sleepy people nothing would be accomplished. At this time I am always afraid of our falling into a lethargic condition. This church numbers nearly five thousand members, but if you are only five thousand cowards the battle will bring no glory to God. If we have one David among us, that one hero will do wonders; but think what an army

would be if all the soldiers were Davids—it would be an ill case with the Philistines then. Oh that we were all Davids, that the weakest among us were as David, and David himself were better than he is, and became like an angel of the Lord! God's Holy Spirit is equal to the doing of this, and why should he not do it? Let us call to him for help, and that help will come.

I must just say this word to some here present who lament that there is nothing in this sermon for them. Unconverted persons, you who cannot draw any argument from your past experience, for you have none of a right kind; but you may draw comfort, and I pray you do so, from another view of this story. Jesus Christ, the true David, has plucked some of us like lambs from between the jaws of the devil. Many of us were carried captive by sin; transgression had so encumbered us about that we were unable to escape, but our great Lord delivered us. Sinner, why can he not deliver you? If you cannot fight the lion of the pit, HE can. Do you ask me, What are you to do? Well, call for his help as loudly as you can. If you are like a lamb, bleat to him, and the bleatings of the lamb will attract the shepherd's ear. Cry mightily unto the Lord for salvation, and trust alone in the Lord Jesus. He will save you. If you were between the jaws of hell, yet, if you believe in him, he would surely pluck you out of destruction. God grant that you may find it so, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SERMON XV.

THE GOD OF BETHEL.

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I am the God of Bethel."—Genesis xxxi. 13.

JACOB had been sent away to Padan-aram, and he might, perhaps, have stopped there if things had been quite as he wished. As it was, he stayed there quite long enough. He seemed almost to forget his father's house in the cares that his wives and children and the anxious oversight of his constantly increasing flocks involved; but God did not mean him to remain at Padan-aram. He was to lead the separated life in Canaan, and therefore things grew very uncomfortable with Laban. He was not a nice man to live with at any time, but he began to show his crotchets, and his heart-burnings, and a good deal of that scheming spirit of which there was a little in Jacob. It came to him from his mother, who was Laban's true sister, and had her share of the family failing. So there were endless bickerings, and bargainings, and disputes, and overreachings the one of the other, till at last, as God would have it, Jacob could bear it no longer, and he resolved to take leave of that land, and return to the land of his kindred. An angel appeared to him then to comfort him in going back to his father's house; and the angel spake in the

name of the Lord and said, "I am the God of Bethel," which must have at once suggested to Jacob *that the Lord had not changed*, more especially in regard to him. The occurrence at Bethel was the first special occasion, probably, upon which he had known the Lord, and though many years had passed, God comes to him as the same God as he was before. "I am the God of Bethel." You remember, some of you, perhaps, the first time when pardoning love was revealed to you —when you were brought to see the love of God in the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Well, to-night, the Lord says to you, "I am the same God as you have ever found me. I have not changed. I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed, even as your father Jacob was not consumed; for I was even to him the selfsame God." Brethren, what a mercy it is that we have an immutable God. Everything else changes. Yon moon, which but a little while ago was full, you see now young and new again, and soon she will fill her horns. Everything beneath her beams changes like herself. We are never at one stage, and our circumstances are perpetually varying. But thou, O God, art the same, and of thy years there is no end. Thy creatures are a sea, but thou art the *terra firma*, and when our soul comes to rest on thee, thou Rock of Ages, then we know what stability means, and, for the first time, we enjoy true rest. Trust ye in the Lord forever, and rest ye in the Lord alone, for he changes not.

"I AM THE GOD OF BETHEL." Does not that mean, first, *that our God is the God of our early mercies?* As we have already said, Bethel was to Jacob the place of early mercy. Let us look back upon our early mercies. Did they not come to us, as they did to him, unsought and unexpected, and when, perhaps we were unprepared for them? I do not know what were Jacob's feelings when he lay down with a stone for his pillow, but I feel very sure that he never reckoned that the place would be the house of God to him. His excla-

mation showed this when he said, "Surely, God is in this place, and I knew it not!" It was the last thing on his mind that, amidst those stones, the Lord would set up a ladder for him, and would speak from the top of it to his soul. So, dear friends, with some of us, when God appeared to us, it was in a very unexpected manner. Perhaps we were not looking for him, but in us was fulfilled that memorable word, "I am found of them that sought me not." We, like Jacob, were glad to meet him, but we had not expected that he would come, or come in so divine a manner, with such fulness of covenant manifestation, and such richness of grace. But he took our soul or ever we were aware, and carried us right away from ourselves. We, perhaps, like Jacob, were sleeping. God was awake. This was the mercy. And he came to us while yet our heart slept and our mind had not felt awakened towards himself. We seemed slumbering with regard to divine things, but as a dream in the visions of the night, so God came to us. He found us sleeping, but nevertheless he manifested himself to us as he doth not unto the world. Do you remember all that? Then the God you have to look to is the God of that unexpected grace. Do you want grace to-night? Why should you not have it? Are you unfit for it? Do you feel more and more how undeserving you are of it? Yet it came to you before when you were in just such a state. Why should not it come again? Sitting in this house of prayer, why should not we again be startled, and be made to say, "Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not. I did not think when I came within these walls that here he would in such a special manner reveal himself to me; but now I shall always think of the seat wherein I sat, and said, 'How dreadful is this place! It is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.'" The God of unexpected manifestations in your early days is the same God still.

Perhaps, dear friends, some of you can look back upon

those early manifestations as having taken place when you were in a very sad and lonely condition. Jacob was alone. *He was a man that loved society.* There are many signs of that. Perhaps, for the first time in his life, he was then out of the shelter of his tent, and away from the familiar voices of his beloved father and mother. He had always been his mother's son. Something about him had always attracted her. But now no one was within call. He might, perhaps, have heard the roar of the wild beasts, but no familiar voice of a friend was anywhere near. It was a very lonely night to him. Some of us recollect the first night we were away from home—how dreary we felt as children. The same kind of homesickness will come over men and women when they say to themselves, "Now, at last, I have got out of the range wherein I have been accustomed to go, and I have got away from the dear familiar faces that made life so happy to me." Yes, but it was just then that God appeared to him, and have not you found it so? Amidst darkest shades Christ appears to you. Have not you had times of real desolation of spirit, from one cause or another, in which the Lord has seemed more sweet to you than ever he was before? When all created streams have run dry, the everlasting fount has bubbled up with more sweet and cooling streams than it ever did at any other time. Well; recollect all those scenes, and the accompanying circumstances which made them seem so cheering, and then say, "This God, even the God of Bethel, is still my God; and if I am at present in trouble, if I am as lonely now as I was then, if I am brought so low that literally I have nothing but a doorstep for my pillow; if I should lose house, and home, and friends, and be left like an orphan amidst the wild winds, with none to shelter me, yet, O God of Bethel, thou who wast the cover of my head and the protector of my spirit, wilt still be with me, the God of those early visitations in times of my dark distress." Thus the God of Bethel by that visit cheered Jacob's heart. I can

hardly suppose that there was an individual more unhappily circumstanced that night than Jacob was; but I question whether ever any individual in tent or palace woke up so happy in the morning as the patriarch did. Oh, it was a night that might make us wish to lie beneath the selfsame dews, and look up to the selfsame heavens, if we might see the selfsame vision. We would put from us the downy pillow, the luxurious curtains, and the comfortable well-furnished chambers, and say, "Give us, oh, give us Lord, if so it might please thee, that same desert place, if we might but see thyself, and hear thy voice, as Jacob did of old." Oh, how strong he was to pursue his journey after he poured that oil on the top of the stone. I warrant you he went many an extra mile that day in the strength of that night's sleep. Now he could refrain from pining after his kindred and his father's house, and keep his face constantly towards Bethuel's home, whither his father had sent him, for the God of his fathers had said, "I am with thee in all places whither thou goest, and I will bring thee back again unto this place." Now, do you not recollect how you were strengthened and comforted in like manner? Have not you sung

> "Midst darkest shades, if he appear,
> My dawning is begun.
> He is my soul's bright morning star,
> And he my rising sun."

Have not you found him all that you wanted, and more than you expected? Has not grace for grace been given, and strength equal to your day, because the Lord appeared of old unto you? Brethren, the presence of God puts the iron shoes on the feet of the weary traveller; nay, makes his feet like hinds' feet, so that he stands on high places; and while he pours out the oil of gratitude God pours upon him the oil of joy, and puts away his mourning. So the pilgrim foots it merrily over the rough way until he gets to the place

whither he is bidden to go. The God of Bethel, then, is the God of early visits unexpected, given when much needed, and yielding just what was needed of peace to the soul.

"I AM THE GOD OF BETHEL." This title conveys a fresh lesson. Does it not mean, *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ?* What is "Bethel" but "the house of God." Brethren, I hear that term constantly applied to your buildings that are made with stone or iron, with brick and mortar, or with lath and plaster, or whatever it may be. Every little conventicle that is put up, and every huge cathedral that is reared, be it a building with lowly porch or lofty spire, is called the house of God. Well, did you never read where it is said, "God that made heaven and earth dwelleth not in temples made with hands, that is to say, of this building"? Have you never read that magnificent sentence of Solomon at the consecration of the temple, "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built"? Think ye then that he will dwell in any of these classic buildings, be they of Greek, or Gothic, of Norman or mediæval architecture? Oh, sirs, God is great and greatly to be praised, as much outside as inside of your petty structures. He is everywhere; he filleth all things: and God's house is not a place that you can build for him, artistic as your tastes may be. Your memorial windows are not his remembrancers. They may charm you, they cannot cheat him. But there is a place where God ever dwells. What habitation hath he prepared for himself, and what tabernacle hath he builded? There is one abode mysteriously fashioned. We speak of its strange conception and its matchless purity of architecture. It was the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. "A body hast thou prepared me." And the house of God, the true Bethel, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, for "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." For "the word was made flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory, the

glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The house of God is first the person of Christ, and then the church of God, which is the body of Christ mystically. This is the house and the household of God, even the church of the living God.

Not now to insist upon the meaning of that word Bethel, or on him who came to Bethlehem, and there was born the very house of the divine indwelling, I will rather muse upon that vision which made God, especially to Jacob that night, the God of the Saviour. He saw the ladder, the foot whereof was on earth, and the top whereof reached to heaven—a ladder which can never be explained in any other way than as a figure of that same Christ who came down from heaven, who also is in heaven, by whom we must ascend to heaven, and through whom heaven's blessings come down to us.

The God of Bethel is a God who does concern himself with the things of earth, not a God who shuts himself up in heaven, but a God who hath a ladder fixed between heaven and earth. The God of most men—the God of the unregenerate—is an inanimate God, or, if alive and able to see, is an unfeeling God, careless about them and their personal interests. "Oh, it is preposterous," say they, "to think that he takes notice of our sorrows and troubles—and still more absurd to suppose that he hears prayer, or that he ever interferes in answer to the voice of supplication, to grant a poor man his requests. It cannot be." That is their God, you see. That is the God of the heathen—a dead, blind, dumb God. I do not wonder that they do not pray to him. They could not expect an answer. But the God of grace is one who has opened a communication between heaven and earth, who notices the cries of his children, puts their tears into his bottle, sympathizes with their sorrows, looks down on them with an eye of pity and a father's love, has communion with them, and permits them to have communion

with him, and all that through the blessed person of the Lord Jesus Christ. See where the foot of this ladder rests on earth, for he lies in the manger at Bethlehem as a babe. He lives on earth the life of a common laborer, wearing the smock-frock of toil. He dies upon the accursed tree a felon's death, that he may be like man even in bearing the image of death upon his face. This is where the ladder stands, in the miry clay of manhood. But see where it rises, for he is equal with God, co-equal, equal in power, and wisdom, and holiness, and every glorious attribute, very God of very God, before whom angels bow. The bottom of the ladder comes down to man, but the top of it reaches right up to God, in all the glory of the mysterious Godhead. Thus, you see, there is a link between the two. And the God we worship does hold fellowship with us, and remains no silent spectator of our griefs. Up that ladder angels ascend, and our prayers ascend, our praises, our tears, our sighs. Jesus teaches them the way. And there is a traffic downwards, too, for blessings come down both rich and rare, by the way of the Mediator. We shall never be able to count them. How great is the sum of them! What traffic there is on the rungs of that ladder! Upwards, O my soul, send thy messengers a thousand times a day; but downwards God's messengers are continually coming—mercies, favors, altogether as innumerable as the sands that are upon the sea-shore, and all coming down that ladder. There is a way of judgment which the swift-winged angel takes without a ladder, but the way of mercy always needs the staircase of light. No mercy or favor comes to us, save through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom we deal with God and God deals with us.

That way in Jacob's dream, you will notice, was eminently a way commended to him, for the foot of the ladder was where Jacob lay, and the top of it was where God was. Have we realized this? Do you know God, my brothers and sisters, as one with whom *you* can speak—with whom *you*

can speak yourself—as real to you as your husband, your father, your friend? Are you in the habit of keeping up constant communication with your God? If you are, you know the God of Bethel. If you are not, I pray that the God of Bethel may reveal himself to you. You could not have had fellowship with God if there had been no Christ. Without the ladder how could there be a connection between Jacob and God? But with the ladder, even Jesus Christ, the way is open, open always, open now. Oh, it has been open many and many a time. We have resorted to it, and never found it closed. We have cried to him in deep distress, but the way upwards has been open when all surrounding ways were shut. We have wanted mercy, and mercy has come when we thought that mercy could not possibly reach us. Yet it came downwards when it could not come in any other way. And it is just the same to-night. Oh, use the ladder: use it well. Dart thy desires upwards now. They shall tread those rounds. Thy thanks, thy petitions, thy confessions—send them up. They are welcome. The ladder is made on purpose for the traffic. Do thou use it now, and as thou usest it bless the God of Bethel with all thy heart.

Still further let us remember that this God of Bethel is *the God of angels.* We do not often say much about those mysterious beings, for it is but little that we know of them. This, however, we know—that angels are set by God to be the *watchers* over his people. Jacob was asleep, but the angels were wide awake. They were going up and down that ladder while Jacob was lying there, steeped in slumber. So when you and I are sleeping, when the blessed God has put his fingers on our eyelids, and said, "Lie still, my child, and be refreshed," there may be no policeman at the door, no body-guard to prevent intrusion, but there are angels ever watching over us. We shall not come to harm if we put our trust in God. "I will lay me down to sleep, for thou

makest me to dwell in safety." These angels were also *messengers.* "Are they not all ministering spirits?" and are they not sent with messages from God? To Jacob they had their errand. On more than one occasion angels bore him messages from the Most High. How far or how oft they bring us messages now I cannot tell. Sometimes thoughts drop into the soul that do not reach us in the regular connection of our thoughts. We scarcely know how to account for them. It may be they are due to the immediate action of the blessed Spirit, but they may, for aught we know, be brought by some other spirit, pure and heavenly, sent to suggest those thoughts to our soul. We cannot tell. The angels are watchers certainly, and they are messengers without a doubt. Moreover, they are our *protectors.* God employs them to bear us up in their hands, lest at any time we dash our foot against a stone. We do not see them, but unseen agencies are probably the strongest agencies in the world. We know it is so in physics. Such agencies as electricity, which we cannot perceive, nevertheless, unquestionably powerful, and, when put forth in their strength, quite beyond the control of man. No doubt myriads of spiritual creatures walk this earth, both when we sleep and when we wake. How much of good they do us it is impossible for us to tell. But this we do know—they are "sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation," and they are in God's hands the means, oftentimes, of warding off from us a thousand ills which we know not of, and about which, therefore, we cannot thank God that we are kept from them, except we do so by thanking him, as I think we ought to do more often, for those unknown mercies which are none the less precious because we have not the sense to be able to perceive them. Perhaps in mid-air at this moment there may be battles between the bright spirits of God and the spirits of evil. Perhaps full often when Satan might tempt, there come against him a mighty

squadron of cherubim and seraphim to drive him back, and those strange battles of which Milton sings in his wondrous epic may not be all a dream. We cannot tell. We know they do dispute; the good angels do dispute with the wicked, and contend. We know that they are mighty in battle, and strong on behalf of God's people. Anyhow, this is true; Omnipotence has many servants, and some of those least seen are the strongest it employs. If there be an angel anywhere, my friend, he is thy friend if thou be God's friend. If there be in heaven or earth any intelligence flying swiftly at this moment, he flies upon no errand of harm to thee. Be thou full sure of that. Occasionally I meet with very foolish people, who believe in things which are unrevealed, in things superstitious, in glamors strange, and baseless fancies. Ofttimes they are not a little frightened about I scarcely know what—about enchantments, divinations, or sorceries. There is such a credulity that still survives among the extremely ignorant. But whenever I have heard such observations I have always thought of that wonderful text in the Book of Numbers, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." There can be no spiritual powers which you or I have any need to fear. I remember hearing a good brother speak about courage against the devil, and in reference to spiritual power he said that he believed that a man of God, when he had faith, could kick his way through a street full of devils from one end to the other. I admired his simile. It was worthy of Martin Luther, for it was the kind of thing that Martin Luther would have said. Oh, if the air were as full of devils as it is of fogs, a man that has God within him might laugh them all to scorn. Who can hurt the man whom God protects? Unseen powers and terrible they may be, but they cannot injure us, for there are other unseen powers more terrible still, the hosts of that Lord who is mighty in battle, and all these are sworn to protect the

children of God. "Thou hast given commandment to save me," says David; and if God has charged his angels to protect and save his people from all harm, depend upon it they are secure.

Moreover, *the God of Bethel is the God of Providence.* That he is the God of Providence, and that he revealed himself as such, is very clear, for he told Jacob, "Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and I will bring thee again to this land, for I will not leave thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of;" so he gave Jacob a promise, that he should have bread to eat and raiment to put on, and should come again to that place in peace. Christian, thy God is the God of Providence. He is the God of Bethel. Doddridge's hymn, which we sang just now, thus celebrates his praise—

> "O God of Bethel, by whose hand
> Thy people still are fed;
> Who through this weary pilgrimage
> Hast all our fathers led."

Let us think of it. Brethren, God is with his people in all places wherever they go. On the land or on the sea, by day or by night, you never can be where God is not. It is impossible for you to journey out of your Father's dominions. You may live in a mansion or a hovel, and yet still be in his house, for his house is of vast dimensions. "In my Father's house are many mansions." You may dwell here or there, and still be in the great house of the heavenly Father.

And he is with you to provide you with all things needful. Has not it been so until now? You may have had some very hard pinches. Perhaps you have partaken the bitter fare of widowhood. Your children may have cried about your knee for daily bread. Perchance you have been very poor, and the supply you have received has been scant. Still you are alive. Thy food has been given thee, and thy

waters have been sure. Thy garments are worn, but not quite worn out. Thy shoes about thee scarcely defend thee from the damp; but still thou art not altogether unshod. Hitherto the Lord hath helped thee. Jehovah-Jireh has been thy song. The Lord has provided. He whom Jacob worshipped as the God of Bethel, has been the God of Bethel till now. Canst thou not trust him? The little birds in the winter morning sit on the bare boughs and sing when the snow covers all the ground, and they cannot tell where their breakfast will come from. They do the first duty, they sing, and they sing before they have had their breakfast, and God somehow provides for them. Seldom do you pick up a dead sparrow. For the most part the birds of heaven are fed. Perhaps you would like to live in a cage and be fed regularly, and have a pension. I believe that more of those birds die that are taken care of as pets by men and women than of those that are taken care of by God. So it is better for you to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. He has not let you want, nor will he, even to your journey's end. Take this from his own mouth. "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and *verily* thou shalt be fed." There is God's "*verily*" for it. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but that "verily" shall never fail.

He promised Jacob, too, that he should have a seed and a posterity. It did not look like it as Jacob lay there; but yet he proved its verity or ever he came back. Why, when he returned he had some twelve children about him. There was a God of Bethel! He had indeed granted him the desire of his heart. As the good man said a little while after, "With my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now have I become two bands." Ah, Jacob! he promised to provide for you. Look at the troop of children. "Ay," but Jacob might have said, "that is part of the burden." Nay, then, but listen to the bleating of those sheep. Listen to the lowing of the cattle. What meaneth that, Jacob? "That is

the provision that God has given me in the land of exile." Ah, and you have most of you got far more than you ever reckoned upon. You have, some of you, to thank God indeed for what he has done for you in providential things, and even those that have least have got more than they deserved. Let them recollect that; and however poor we may be, we shall never be as poor as we were when we were born. We brought nothing into this world. Come as low as we may, we shall have enough to float us into heaven, depend upon that—just enough manna to last until we get across Jordan, and then we shall eat of the old corn of the land that floweth with milk and honey.

But God had also promised Jacob that he would bring him back to that place again, and that was another engagement of providence—that he was to go there and be brought back again, and by this should it be known that he was the God of Bethel. Now this really looked at one time very unlikely. Seven years he had to serve for Rachel, and then got Leah instead, so there were seven more years to serve for Rachel. Then there came one year during which he had to be after the spotted-sheep, then another after the ring-streaked, and so on; so it did not look as if he should ever get away from Mesopotamia at peace. Would he do it? Yes, he would drive him out of Laban's house somehow, for return to his fatherland he must. Yet as soon as he gets out of Laban's house, Laban is after him in hot haste. I do not know what Laban was going to do—something very horrible indeed—going to slay the father and mother with the children; but by the time he gets close up to Jacob he cannot help himself: his heart is changed. He wants to kiss his daughters and his grandchildren, and he has not got any thought of anger in him. God had warned him in a dream not to speak to Jacob either good or bad. So Laban tells Jacob that he is very sorry that he did not know that he was going, for he would have sent him out with mirth

and with songs, with tabret and with harp. Though the truth is he would not have let him go at all. But God knew how to manage Laban, though Jacob did not; and when Jacob had left Laban's land, Jacob had dwelt long enough in Laban's land, and so he was never to pass into it again, for they had left a heap of stones, and that reminded them that neither of them was to go over those stones to hurt one another; and they said, "the Lord watch between us when we are absent from one another." And they did not interfere witn one another any more.

There are many things in providence that God will bring to pass in a very mysterious way. He uses trial and trouble full often to compass his wise designs. It is not the winds that blow directly towards the harbor that are always the best for ships. They speed better with cross winds sometimes, as you might think them—winds not altogether favorable, as some would imagine because they have a little touch of another quarter in them. And so it appears to me that the best wind to take a man to heaven is not the wind that blows due heavenward all the time, as he fondly wishes, but a cross wind that gives you a little chop of sea now and then, and makes you feel the stress of anxiety and adversity. The thing a man wishes for his own welfare is not always the most desirable. Full often the damage we dreaded has brought us a blessing we had not expected. Some sad reverse has issued in a glad result. We had better leave it with God to order all our affairs. Brethren, God manages providence; you may rest assured of that. He stands in the chariot and holds the reins. Though the steeds be furious, he holds them with bit and bridle. Nothing happens but what God ordains or permits. Nothing, however terrible it may seem, can thwart his everlasting purposes, or turn aside one of his dear children from the eternal inheritance to which he has appointed them all. Rest ye in the Lord, for the Lord liveth and the Lord

reigneth. Stay yourselves upon him. Nothing can hurt you. Make him your refuge, and you shall find a most secure abode, and rejoice in the God of Bethel, who is God of providence.

Next to this, the God of Bethel is *the God of the promises.* What a many promises he made that night to Jacob! Yet he kept them all. So the God of Bethel is to you and to me the God of promises.

The everlasting covenant was confirmed to Jacob—"I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac." That meant that he was the God of the covenant. And the God with whom you and I have to deal is a God who may do as he wills. He is an absolute sovereign, but he never can do anything but what is right. Nevertheless, he has bound himself—to speak with reverence—with bonds and pledges to us in the person of Jesus Christ, saying, "Surely, blessing, I will bless thee." There is a covenant entered into on our behalf by the Lord Jesus with the Father. It brings to us unnumbered blessings, assuredly and certainly, for God cannot lie, and he has given us two immutable pledges, that we may have strong consolation, and never doubt his faithfulness. Beloved, the God of the promises has appointed your lot and heritage, and you shall stand in it at the end of the days. The God of the promises has appeared to you in Jesus Christ, and to you also has he sworn an oath; therefore, you also may rest in the blood of Jesus, which makes the covenant sure. He has promised never to leave his people. "I will not leave thee," saith he to Jacob; and he says the like to you. He has promised that he will never forget to give what he has declared he will give. I will not leave thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Oh, blessed word! I feel as if my mouth were closed and words failed me. The divine utterance itself is so rich, so full of marrow and fatness, that to talk about it seems like gilding gold, or adding whiteness to the lily's beauty.

Only take it home. May the Spirit of God apply it. The God that changes not has made all the promises, yea and amen, in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us, and every one of his promises made to believers shall stand fast and firm, though earth's old columns bow—"though heaven and earth shall pass away, neither jot nor tittle of his word shall fail."

But time fails me. I must leave this inspiring meditation just to notice once more that the God of Bethel is *the God of our vows.* Do not forget this last, for it is the practical part—the God of Bethel is the God of our vows. You remember, brethren, Jacob vowed that God should be his God. You remember when you made a like vow.

> "Oh, happy day that fixed my choice
> On thee, my Saviour and my God;
> Well may this glowing heart rejoice
> And tell its rapture all abroad.
> High heaven that heard that solemn vow,
> That vow renewed shall daily hear,
> Till in life's latest hour I bow,
> And bless in death a bond so dear."

God who gave himself to us has led us to give ourselves to him. Now we are not our own, for we are bought with a price. Looking up from the inmost recesses of our sincere hearts we can say, "My God, my Father, thou art mine for ever and forever." And then Jacob having made that vow, said—"this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house." In the fresh gratitude of his heart he made a solemn dedication to the Lord. And have you not said something like it? Did not you give your house to God when you gave yourself to him? Have you not given to God not only one place to be a Bethel, but have not you asked him to make your whole life, and every place where you are, a Bethel to his name? So it should be, and I trust so it is, for this is true Christianity—not to account this

place or that edifice holy, but to make every place, be it your kitchen, or your parlor, your bedchamber, or your workshop, holy; and the pots and the pans, and the implements of your daily calling all holy before the Lord. Is that your vow? Let it be your daily desire that that vow should be fulfilled—for God be ye resolved to live, for God ready to die, if need be—never doing anything but what you can ask his blessing on; and whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, doing all to the glory of God, and doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus, give thanks to God and the Father by him. This should be true.

The other thing that Jacob promised was that he would give a tenth unto the Lord. I do not know whether any of you have made any vow of that kind. I suppose there are few Christians who have not, at some time or other, made a vow. Well, brethren and sisters, perform your vows unto the Lord. God forbid that we should ever say anything in the heat of emotion, or make any pledge without due premeditation, for God is not to be mocked. When we have once devoted anything unto the Lord, let us not draw back our hand. I have known Christian men who have said, "If the Lord should prosper me till I am worth such and such an amount, all that I gain beyond it shall be given as a free-will offering to him." I know one or two of the largest givers in Christendom who are thus fulfilling the vows they made. Yet I have also known some persons entangled by their vows. They have had in perplexity to ask, "What am I to do? I am in such a position that a larger capital than I ever contemplated is really necessary for the carrying on of my business: yet I have pledged myself to save and call my own no more than a definite sum which I have already in possession." You must take heed how you vow, for you may entangle yourself. Very often it is best not to vow at all; but if in the hour of sorrow you have opened your mouth unto the Lord, take heed that you do not with-

draw from the thing your heart has purposed, and your lips have uttered. Sometimes the Lord directs his people to make some solemn pledge, which otherwise they might not have done, on purpose that they may do more for the glory and honor of his name than they have ever done before. I remember one night, when I was about to preach, my subject went from me, my text and every thought about it were gone. It was in a village chapel, and I sat there I know not in what state of trepidation. I breathed my soul to God; and there came before me as in a moment the face of a certain worthy brother—a poor man, exceedingly poor—who wanted me to assist him in his education, but I had not the means just then: I did not know how to do it. I breathed a prayer to God that he would help me, and I promised that that brother should be taken. He was one of my earliest students, and he has been honored of God, and blessed in the conversion of souls for the past sixteen or seventeen years. I do not think that I should ever have taken him if it had not been for that dilemma of mine. And when I had vowed the vow unto the Lord that I would find the money for him, even if I went without myself, my sermon came back to me, and I preached with pleasure, and I hope with profit. I was glad of my vow, and I was able to keep it. Sometimes such things are right. At other times it would be absurd to make such a vow. Better to feel that everything belongs to God already, and therefore you have nothing to spare to vow with, because you have already consecrated everything that you had from first to last to his glory. Yet if you ever do set up an Ebenezer in your pilgrimage, be sure to pour some oil out of your cruse at the time to hallow it, as Jacob did. Then the vows you have ratified will be sweet to look back upon. The God of Bethel, who remembers the vow that thou vowedst unto him, will be the more precious unto thy soul. I should not wonder if that woman who poured the alabaster box of ointment on Christ's

head used often to think what a blessed thing it was that she did. I am sure that there was not one time in all her life that she ever said, "Oh, how handy the money of that alabaster box would come in now; I wish I had not spent it." No, she would think it over oftentimes. Perhaps she became a poor woman afterwards. At any rate, Christ was gone, and she would say, "Oh, how glad I am that when the opportunity offered I seized it." Though Judas said, "To what purpose is this waste?" she did not care much about Judas. She would say, "I anointed my blessed Master and filled the house with the sweet perfume, and I am glad I did it, and I shall be glad even when I see his face in heaven." So will you often feel. Take no credit to yourself for anything you do. That we could never tolerate. Yet be thankful if the Lord leads you in his providence, and enables you by his grace to do something special for him. It will make you think with all the more sweetness of the God of Bethel as you read of the way in which God accepts your votive offering; for my text runs like this: "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me." So the vow is part and parcel of the title which God loves to remember, and would have us lovingly remember too.

Dear friends, I am afraid there are some among you who do not know the God of Bethel. Let me tell you that he is the God you want—the God of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only ladder for your poor souls to get to heaven by. This is a ladder with easy rounds. It is a ladder strong enough to bear the biggest sinner that ever tried to bear his weight on it, and if thou wilt but come and trust Jesus, thou shalt get up that ladder even to the place where Jehovah dwells in all his purity, and thou shalt be with him forever and ever.

SERMON XVI.

THE STORY OF A RUNAWAY SLAVE.

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him forever."—Philemon 15.

NATURE is selfish, but grace is loving. He who boasts that he cares for nobody, and nobody cares for him, is the reverse of a Christian, for Jesus Christ enlarges the heart when he cleanses it. None so tender and sympathetic as our Master, and if we be truly his disciples, the same mind will be in us which was also in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul was eminently large-hearted and sympathetic. Surely he had enough to do at Rome to bear his own troubles and to preach the gospel. If, like the priest in the parable of the good Samaritan, he had "passed by on the other side," he might have been excused, for he was on the urgent business of that Master who once said to his seventy messengers, "Salute no man by the way." We might not have wondered if he had said, "I cannot find time to attend to the wants of a runaway slave." But Paul was not of that mind. He had been preaching, and Onesimus had been converted, and henceforth he regarded him as his own son. I do not know why Onesimus came to Paul. Perhaps he went to him as a great many scapegraces have come to me—because their

fathers knew me; and so, as Onesimus's master had known Paul, the servant applied to his master's friend, perhaps to beg some little help in his extremity. Anyhow, Paul seized the opportunity and preached to him Jesus, and the runaway slave became a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul watched him, admired the character of his convert, and was glad to be served by him, and when he thought it right that he should return to his master, Philemon, he took a deal of trouble to compose a letter of apology for him, a letter which shows long thinking, since every word is well selected; albeit that the Holy Spirit dictated it, inspiration does not prevent a man's exercising thought and care on what he writes. Every word is chosen for a purpose. If he had been pleading for himself, he could not have pleaded more earnestly or wisely. Paul, as you know, was not accustomed to write letters with his own hand, but dictated to an amanuensis. It is supposed that he had an affection of the eyes, and therefore when he did write he used large capital letters, as he says in one of his epistles, "Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with my own hand." The epistle was not a large one, but he probably alluded to the largeness of the characters which he was obliged to use whenever he himself wrote. This letter to Philemon, at least part of it, was not dictated, but was written by his own hand. See the nineteenth verse. "I Paul have written it with mine own hand. I will repay it." It is the only note of hand which I recollect in the Scripture, but there it is—an I O U for whatever amount Onesimus may have stolen.

Let us cultivate a large-hearted spirit, and sympathize with the people of God, especially new converts, if we find them in trouble through past wrong-doing. If anything needs setting right, do not let us condemn them off-hand, and say, "You have been stealing from your master, have you? You profess to be converted, but we do not believe it." Such suspicious and severe treatment may be deserved,

but it is not such as the love of Christ would suggest. Try and set the fallen ones right, and give them again, as we say, "a fair start in the world." If God has forgiven them, surely we may, and if Jesus Christ has received them, they cannot be too bad for us to receive. Let us do for them what Jesus would have done had he been here, so shall we truly be the disciples of Jesus.

Thus I introduce to you the text, and I notice concerning it, first that it concerns *a singular instance of divine grace.* Secondly, it brings before us *a case of sin overruled.* And, thirdly, it may be regarded as *an example of relationship improved by grace,* for now he that was a servant for a season will abide with Philemon all his lifetime, and be no more a servant but a brother beloved.

I. But first let us look at Onesimus as AN INSTANCE OF DIVINE GRACE.

We see the grace of God in his *election.* He was a slave. In those days slaves were very ignorant, untaught, and degraded. Being barbarously used, they were for the most part themselves sunk in the lowest barbarism, neither did their masters attempt to raise them out of it. It is possible that Philemon's attempt to do good to Onesimus may have been irksome to the man, and he may therefore have fled from his house. His master's prayers, warnings, and Christian regulations may have been disagreeable to him, and therefore he ran away. He wronged his master, which he could scarcely have done if he had not been treated as a confidential servant to some extent. Possibly the unusual kindness of Philemon, and the trust reposed in him may have been too much for his untrained nature. We know not what he stole, but evidently he had taken something, for the apostle says, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that on mine account." He ran away from Colosse, therefore, and thinking that he would be less likely to be discovered by the ministers of justice, he sought the city of

Rome, which was then as large as the city of London now is, and perhaps larger. There in those back slums, such as the Jews' quarter in Rome now is, Onesimus would go and hide; or amongst those gangs of thieves which infested the imperial city, he would not be known or heard of any more, so he thought; and he could live the free and easy life of a thief. Yet, mark you, the Lord looked out of heaven with an eye of love, and set that eye on Onesimus.

Were there no free men, that God must elect a slave? Were there no faithful servants, that he must choose one who had embezzled his master's money? Were there none of the educated and polite, that he must needs look upon a barbarian? Were there none among the moral and excellent, that infinite love should fix itself upon this degraded being, who was now mixed up with the very scum of society? And what the scum of society was in old Rome I should not like to think, for the upper classes were about as brutalized in their general habits as we can very well conceive; and what the lowest scum of all must have been, none of us can tell. Onesimus was part and parcel of the dregs of a sink of sin. Read Paul's first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, if you can, and you will see in what a horrible state the heathen world was at that time, and Onesimus was among the worst of the worst; and yet eternal love, which passed by kings and princes, and left Pharisees and Sadducees, philosophers and magi, to stumble in the dark as they chose, fixed its eye upon this poor benighted creature that he might be made a vessel to honor, fit for the Master's use.

"When the Eternal bows the skies
To visit earthly things,
With scorn divine he turns his eyes
From towers of haughty kings.

He bids his awful chariot roll
Far downward from the skies,
To visit every humble soul,
With pleasure in his eyes.

Why should the Lord that reigns above
  Disdain so lofty kings?
Say, Lord, and why such looks of love
  Upon such worthless things?

Mortals, be dumb; what creature dares
  Dispute his awful will?
Ask no account of his affairs,
  But tremble and be still.

Just like his nature is his grace,
  All sovereign, and all free;
Great God, how searchless are thy ways,
  How deep thy judgments be!"

"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," rolls like thunder alike from the cross of Calvary and the mount of Sinai. The Lord is a sovereign, and he doeth as he pleases. Let us admire that marvellous electing love which selected such a one as Onesimus.

Grace also is to be observed, in the next place, in the *conversion* of this runaway slave.

Look at him! How unlikely he appears to become a convert. He is an Asiatic slave of about the same grade as an ordinary Lascar, or heathen Chinee. He was, however, worse than the ordinary Lascar, who is certainly free, and probably an honest man, if he is nothing else. This man has been dishonest, and he was daring withal, for after taking his master's property he was bold enough to make a long journey from Colosse to reach Rome. But everlasting love means to convert the man, and converted he shall be. He may have heard Paul preach at Colosse and Athens, but yet he had not been impressed. At Rome, Paul was not preaching in St. Peter's: it was in no such noble building. Paul was not preaching in a place like the Tabernacle, where Onesimus could have a comfortable seat—no such place as that—but it was probably down there at the back of

the Palatine hill, where the prætorian guard have their lodgings, and where there was a prison called the Prætorium. In a bare room in the barrack prison Paul sat with a soldier chained to his hand, preaching to all who were admitted to hear him, and there it was that the grace of God reached the heart of this wild young man; and, oh, what a change it made in him immediately! Now you see him repenting of his sin, grieved to think he has wronged a good man, vexed to see the depravity of his heart as well as the error of his life. He weeps; Paul preaches to him Christ crucified, and the glance of joy is in his eye: and from that heavy heart a load is taken. New thoughts light up that dark mind; the very face is changed, and the entire man renewed, for the grace of God can turn the lion to a lamb, the raven to a dove.

Some of us, I have no doubt, are quite as wonderful instances of divine election and effectual calling as Onesimus was. Let us, therefore, record the loving kindness of the Lord, and let us say to ourselves, "Christ shall have the glory of it. The Lord hath done it; and unto the Lord be honor, world without end."

The grace of God was conspicuous in *the character which it wrought in Onesimus* upon his conversion, for he appears to have been helpful, useful, and profitable. So Paul says. Paul was willing to have had him as an associate, and it is not every man that is converted that we should altogether choose as a companion. There are odd people to be met with who will go to heaven, we have no doubt, for they are pilgrims on the right way, but we would like to keep on the other side of the road, for they are cross-grained, and there is a something about them that one's nature can no more delight in than the palate can take pleasure in nauseous physic. They are a sort of spiritual hedgehogs: they are alive and useful, and no doubt they illustrate the wisdom and patience of God, but they are not good companions: one would not like to carry them in his bosom. But Onesi-

mus was evidently of a kind, tender, loving spirit. Paul at once called him brother, and would have liked to retain him. When he sent him back, was it not a clear proof of change of heart in Onesimus that he would go back? Away as he was in Rome, he might have passed on from one town to another, and have remained perfectly free, but feeling that he was under some kind of bond to his master—especially since he had injured him—he takes Paul's advice to return to his old position. He will go back, and take a letter of apology or introduction to his master; for he feels that it is his duty to make reparation for the wrong that he has done. I always like to see a resolve to make restitution of former wrongs in people who profess to be converted. If they have taken any money wrongfully they ought to repay it; it were well if they returned sevenfold. If we have in any way robbed or wronged another, I think the first instincts of grace in the heart will suggest compensation in all ways within our power. Do not think it is to be got over by saying, "God has forgiven me, and therefore I may leave it." No, dear friend, but insomuch as God has forgiven you, try and undo all the wrong, and prove the sincerity of your repentance by so doing. So Onesimus will go back to Philemon, and work out his term of years with him, or otherwise do Philemon's wishes, for though he might have preferred to wait upon Paul, his first duty was due to the man whom he had injured. That showed a gentle, humble, honest, upright spirit; and let Onesimus be commended for it: nay, let the grace of God be extolled for it. Look at the difference between the man who robbed, and the man who now comes back to be profitable to his master.

What wonders the grace of God has done! Brethren, let me add—What wonders the grace of God can do! Many plans are employed in the world for the reformation of the wicked and the reclaiming of the fallen, and to every one of these, as far as they are rightly bottomed, we wish good

success; for whatever things are lovely and pure, and of good report, we wish them God speed. But mark this word,—the true reforming of the drunkard lies in giving him a new heart; the true reclaiming of the harlot is to be found in a renewed nature. Purity will never come to fallen women by those hideous Contagious Diseases Acts, which, to my mind, wear, like Cain, a curse upon their forehead. Womanhood will but sink the lower under such laws. The harlot must be washed in the Saviour's blood, or she will never be clean. The lowest strata of society will never be brought into the light of virtue, sobriety, and purity, except by Jesus Christ and his gospel; and we must stick to that. Let all others do what they like, but God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. I see certain of my brethren fiddling away at the branches of the tree of vice with their wooden saws; but, as for the gospel, it lays the axe at the roots of the whole forest of evil, and if it be fairly received into the heart it fells all the upas trees at once, and instead of them there spring up the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box tree together, to beautify the house of our Master's glory. Let us, when we see what the Spirit of God can do for men, publish the grace of God, and extol it with all our might.

II. And now, secondly, we have in our text and its connections, a very interesting INSTANCE OF SIN OVERRULED.

Onesimus had no right to rob his master and run away; but God was pleased to make use of that crime for his conversion. It brought him to Rome, and so brought him where Paul was preaching, and thus it brought him to Christ, and to his right mind. Now, when we speak of this, we must be cautious. When Paul says, "Perhaps he departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him forever," he does not excuse his departure. He does not make it out that Onesimus did right—not for a moment. Sin is sin, and whatever sin may be overruled to do, yet sin is still

sin. The crucifixion of our Saviour has brought the greatest conceivable blessings upon mankind, yet none the less it was "with wicked hands" that they took Jesus and crucified him. The selling of Joseph into Egypt was the means in the hand of God of the preservation of Jacob, and his sons, in the time of famine; but his brethren had nothing to do with that, and they were none the less guilty for having sold their brother for a slave. Let it always be remembered that the faultiness or virtue of an act is not contingent upon the result of that act. If, for instance, a man who has been set on a railway to turn the switch forgets to do it, you call it a very great crime if the train comes to mischief and a dozen people are killed. Yes, but the crime is the same if nobody is killed. It is not the result of the carelessness, but the carelessness itself which deserves punishment. If it were the man's duty to turn the switch in such-and-such a way, and his not doing so should even by some strange accident turn to the saving of a life, the man would be equally blameworthy. There would be no credit due to him, for if his duty lies in a certain line, his fault also lies in a certain line, namely, the neglecting of that duty. So if God overrules sin for good, as he sometimes does, it is none the less sin. It is sin just as much as ever, only there is so much the more glory to the wonderful wisdom and grace of God who, out of evil brings forth good, and so does what only omnipotent wisdom can perform. Onesimus is not excused, then, for having embezzled his master's goods nor for having left him without right; he still is a transgressor, but God's grace is glorified.

Remember, too, that this must be noticed—that when Onesimus left his master he was performing an action the results of which, in all probability, would have been ruinous to him. He was living as a trusted dependent beneath the roof of a kind master, who had a church in his house. If I read the epistle rightly, he had a godly mistress and a godly master, and he had an opportunity of learning the gospel

continually; but this reckless young blade, very likely, could not bear it, and could have lived more contentedly with a heathen master, who would have beaten him one day and made him drunk another. The Christian master he could not bear, so away he went. He threw away the opportunities of salvation, and he went to Rome, and he must have gone into the lowest part of the city, and associated, as I have already told you, with the very grossest company. Now, had it come to pass that he had joined in the insurrections of the slaves which took place frequently about that time, as he in all probability would have done had not grace prevented, he would have been put to death as others had been. He would have had short shrift in Rome: half suspect a man and off with his head was the rule towards slaves and vagabonds. Onesimus was just the very man who would have been likely to be hurried to death and to eternal destruction. He had put his head, as it were, between the lion's jaws by what he had done. When a young man suddenly leaves home and goes to London, we know what it means. When his friends do not know where he is, and he does not want them to know, we are aware, within a little, where he is and what he is at. What Onesimus was doing I do not know, but he was certainly doing his best to ruin himself. His course, therefore, is to be judged, as far as he is concerned, by what it was likely to bring him to; and though it did not bring him to it, that was no credit to him, but all the honor of it is due to the overruling power of God.

See, dear brethren, how God overruled all. Thus had the Lord purposed. Nobody shall be able to touch the heart of Onesimus but Paul. Onesimus is living at Colosse; Paul cannot come there, he is in prison. It is needful, then, that Onesimus must be got to Paul. Suppose the kindness of Philemon's heart had prompted him to say to Onesimus, "I want you to go to Rome, and find Paul out and hear him." This naughty servant would have said, "I am not

going to risk my life to hear a sermon. If I go with the money you are sending to Paul, or with the letter, I shall deliver it, but I want none of his preaching." Sometimes, you know, when people are brought to hear a preacher with the view of their being converted, if they have any idea of it, it is about the very last thing likely to happen, because they go there resolved to be fire-proof, and so the preaching does not come home to them: and it would probably have been just so with Onesimus. No, no, he was not to be won in that way, he must be got to Rome another way. How shall it be done? Well, the devil shall do it, not knowing that he will be losing a willing servant thereby. The devil tempts Onesimus to steal. Onesimus does it, and when he has stolen he is afraid of being discovered, and so he makes tracks for Rome as quickly as he can, and gets down among the back slums, and there he feels what the prodigal felt—a hungry belly, and that is one of the best preachers in the world to some people: their conscience is reached in that way. Being very hungry, not knowing what to do, and no man giving anything to him, he thinks whether there is anybody in Rome that would take pity on him. He does not know anybody in Rome at all, and is likely to starve. Perhaps one morning there was a Christian woman—I should not wonder—who was going to hear Paul, and she saw this poor man sitting crouched up on the steps of a temple, and she went to him and spoke about his soul. "Soul," said he, "I care nothing about that, but my body would thank you for something to eat. I am starving." She replied, "Come with me, then," and she gave him bread, and then she said, "I do this for Jesus Christ's sake." "Jesus Christ!" he said, "I have heard of him. I used to hear of him over at Colosse." "Whom did you hear speak about him?" the woman would ask. "Why, a short man, with weak eyes, a great preacher, named Paul, who used to come to my master's house." "Why, I am going to hear him preach," the

woman would say, "will you come and hear him with me?" "Well, I think I should like to hear him again. He always had a kind word to say to the poor." So he goes in and pushes his way among the soldiers, and Paul's Master incites Paul to speak the right word. It may have been so, or it may have been the other way—that not knowing anybody else at all, he thought, "Well, there is Paul, I know. He is here a prisoner, and I will go down and see what prison he is in." He goes down to the prætorium and finds him there, tells him of his extreme poverty, and Paul talks to him, and then he confesses the wrong he has done, and Paul, after teaching him a little while, says, "Now, you must go back and make amends to your master for the wrong you have done." It may have been either of these ways; at any rate the Lord must have Onesimus in Rome to hear Paul, and the sin of Onesimus, though perfectly voluntary on his part, so that God had no hand in it, is yet overruled by a mysterious providence to bring him where the gospel shall be blest to his soul.

Now, I want to speak to some of you Christian people about this matter. Have you a son who has left home? Is he a wilful, wayward young man, who has gone away because he could not bear the restraints of a Christian family? It is a sad thing it should be so—a very sad thing, but do not despond or even have a thought of despair about him. You do not know where he is, but God does; and you cannot follow him, but the Spirit of God can. He is going a voyage to Shanghai. Ah, there may be a Paul at Shanghai who is to be the means of his salvation, and as that Paul is not in England, your son must go there. Is it to Australia that he is going? There may be a word spoken there by the blessing of God to your son which is the only word which ever will reach him. I cannot speak it: nobody in London can speak it; but the man there will: and God, therefore, is letting him go away in all his wilfulness and folly that he

may be brought under the means of grace, which will prove effectual to his salvation. Many a sailor boy has been wild, reckless, Godless, Christless, and at last has got into a foreign hospital. Ah, if his mother knew that he was down with the yellow fever, how sad her mind would be, for she would conclude that her dear son will die away at Havana, or somewhere, and never come home again. But it is just in that hospital that God means to meet with him. A sailor writes to me something like that. He says, "My mother asked me to read a chapter every day, but I never did. I got into the hospital at Havana, and, when I lay there, there was a man near to me who was dying, and he died one night; but before he died he said to me, 'Mate, could you come here? I want to speak to you. I have got something that is very precious to me here. I was a wild fellow, but reading this packet of sermons has brought me to the Saviour, and I am dying with a good hope through grace. Now, when I am dead and gone, will you take these sermons and read them, and may God bless them to you. And will you write a letter to the man that preached and printed those sermons, to tell him that God blessed them to my conversion, and that I hope he will bless them to yourself'?" It was a packet of my sermons, and God did bless them to that young man who, I have no doubt whatever, went to that hospital because there a man who had been brought to Christ would hand to him the words which God had blessed to himself and would bless to his friend. You do not know, dear mother, you do not know. The worst thing that can happen to a young man is sometimes the best thing that can happen to him. I have sometimes thought when I have seen young men of position and wealth taking to racing and all sorts of dissipation, "Well, it is a dreadfully bad thing, but they may as well get through their money as quickly as ever they can, and then when they have got down to beggary they will be like the young gentleman in the parable who

left his father." When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want, and he said, "I will arise and go to my father." Perhaps the disease that follows vice—perhaps the poverty that comes like an armed man after extravagance and debauch—is but love in another form, sent to compel the sinner to come to himself and consider his ways and seek an ever merciful God.

You Christian people often see the little gutter children—the poor little arabs in the street—and you feel much pity for them, as well you may. There is a dear sister here, Miss Annie McPherson, who lives only for them. God bless her and her work! When you see them you cannot be glad to see them as they are, but I have often thought that the poverty and hunger of one of these poor little children has a louder voice to most hearts than their vice and ignorance; and God knew that we were not ready and able to hear the cry of the child's sin, and so he added the child's hunger to that cry, that it might pierce our hearts. People could live in sin, and yet be happy, if they were well-to-do and rich; and if sin did not make parents poor and wretched, and their children miserable, we should not see it, and therefore we should not arouse ourselves to grapple with it. It is a blessing, you know, in some diseases when the patient can throw the complaint out upon the skin. It is a horrible thing to see it upon the skin, but still it is better than its being hidden inside; and oftentimes the outward sin and the outward misery are a sort of throwing out of the disease, so that the eye of those who know where the healing medicine is to be had is thereby drawn to the disease, and so the soul's secret malady is dealt with. Onesimus might have stopped at home, and he might never have been a thief, but he might have been lost through self-righteousness. But now his sin is visible. The scapegrace has displayed the depravity of his heart, and now it is that he comes under Paul's eye and Paul's prayer, and becomes converted. Do not, I pray you,

ever despair of man or woman or child because you see their sin upon the surface of their character. On the contrary, say to yourself, "This is placed where I can see it, that I may pray about it. It is thrown out under my eye that I may now concern myself to bring this poor soul to Jesus Christ, the mighty Saviour, who can save the most forlorn sinner." Look at it in the light of earnest, active benevolence, and rouse yourselves to conquer it. Our duty is to hope on and pray on. It may be, perhaps, that "he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him forever." Perhaps the boy has been so wayward that his sin may come to a crisis, and a new heart may be given him. Perhaps your daughter's evil has been developed that now the Lord may convince her of sin and bring her to the Saviour's feet. At any rate, if the case be ever so bad, hope in God and pray on.

III. Once more. Our text may be viewed as AN EXAMPLE OF RELATIONS IMPROVED. "He therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him forever; *not now as a servant, but a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee?*" You know we are a long while learning great truths. Perhaps Philemon had not quite found out that it was wrong for him to have a slave. Some men who were very good in their time did not know it. John Newton did not know that he was doing wrong in the slave trade, and George Whitfield, when he left slaves to the orphanage at Savannah, which had been willed to him, did not think for a moment that he was doing anything more than if he had been dealing with horses, or gold and silver. Public sentiment was not then enlightened, although the gospel has always struck at the very root of slavery. The essence of the gospel is that we are to do to others as we would that others should do to us, and nobody would wish to be another man's slave, and therefore he has no right to have another man as his slave. Perhaps, when Onesimus ran away and came back again, this letter of Paul may have

opened Philemon's eyes a little as to his own position. No doubt he may have been an excellent master, and have trusted his servant, and not treated him as a slave at all, but perhaps he had not regarded him as a brother ; and now Onesimus has come back he will be a better servant, but Philemon will be a better master, and a slave-holder no longer. He will regard his former servant as a brother in Christ. Now, this is what the grace of God does when it comes into a family. It does not alter the relations ; it does not give the child a right to be pert, and forget that he is to be obedient to his parents ; it does not give the father a right to lord it over his children without wisdom and love, for it tells him that he is not to provoke his children to anger, lest they be discouraged ; it does not give the servant the right to be a master, neither does it take away from the master his position, or allow him to exaggerate his authority, but all round it softens and sweetens. Rowland Hill used to say that he would not give a halfpenny for a man's piety if his dog and his cat were not better off after he was converted. There was much weight in that remark. Everything in the house goes better when grace oils the wheels. The mistress is, perhaps, rather sharp, quick, tart ; well, she gets a little sugar into her constitution when she receives the grace of God. The servant may be apt to loiter, be late up of a morning, very slovenly, fond of gossip at the door ; but, if she is truly converted, all that kind of thing ends. She is conscientious, and attends to her duty as she ought. The master, perhaps,—well, he *is* the master, and you know it. But when he is a truly Christian man—he has a gentleness, a suavity, a considerateness about him. The husband is the head of the wife, but when renewed by grace he is not at all the head of the wife as some husbands are. The wife also keeps her place, and seeks, by all gentleness and wisdom, to make the house as happy as she can. I do not believe in your religion, dear friend, if it belongs to the Tabernacle,

and the prayer-meeting, and not to your home. The best religion in the world is that which smiles at the table, works at the sewing-machine, and is amiable in the drawing-room. Give me the religion which blacks boots, and does them well; cooks the food, and cooks it so that it can be eaten; measures out yards of calico, and does not make them half-an-inch short; sells a hundred yards of an article, and does not label ninety a hundred, as many tradespeople do. That is the true Christianity which affects the whole of life. If we are truly Christians we shall be changed in all our relationships to our fellow-men, and hence we shall regard those whom we call our inferiors with quite a different eye. It is wrong in Christian people when they are so sharp upon little faults that they see in servants, especially if they are Christian servants. That is not the way to correct them. They see a little something wrong, and, oh, they are down upon the poor girls, as if they had murdered somebody. If your Master, and mine, were to treat you in that style, I wonder how you would get on? How quick some are in discharging their maids for small errors. No excuse, no trying the persons again: they must go. Many a young man has been turned out of a situation for the veriest trifle, by a Christian employer, when he must have known that he would be exposed to all sorts of risks: and many a servant has been sent adrift as if she were a dog, with no sort of thought whether another position could be found, and without anything being done to prevent her going astray. Do let us think of others, especially of those whom Christ loves even as he does us. Philemon might have said, "No, no, I don't take you back, Mr. Onesimus, not I. Once bitten, twice shy, sir. I never ride a broken-kneed horse. You stole my money; I am not going to have you back again." I have heard that style of talk, have not you? Did you ever feel like it? If you have, go home and pray to God to get such a feeling out of you, for it is bad stuff to have in your soul.

You cannot take it to heaven. When the Lord Jesus Christ has forgiven you so freely, are you to take your servant by the throat and say, "Pay me what thou owest?" God forbid that we should continue in such a temper. Be pitiful, easily entreated, ready to forgive. It is a deal better that you should suffer a wrong than do a wrong: much better that you should overlook a fault which you might have noticed, than notice a fault which you ought to have overlooked.

"Let love through all your actions run
And all your words be kind,"

is said in the little hymn which we used to learn when we were children. We should practice it now, and—

"Live like the blessed virgin's son,
That meek and lowly child."

God grant we may, of his infinite grace.

I want to say this, and then I have done. If the mysterious providence of God was to be seen in Onesimus getting to Rome, I wonder whether there is any providence of God in some of you being here to-night! It is possible. Such things do happen. People come here that never meant to come. The last thing in the world they would have believed if anybody had said it, is that they would be here, yet here they are. With all manner of twists and turns they have gone about, but they have got here somehow. Did you miss a train, and so stepped in to wait? Does not your ship sail quite so soon as you expected, and so are you here to-night? Say, is that it? I do pray you, then, consider this question with your own heart. "Does not God mean to bless me? Has he not brought me here on purpose that this night I may yield my heart to Jesus as Onesimus did?" My dear friend, if thou believest on the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt have immediate pardon for all

sin, and shalt be saved. The Lord Jesus has brought thee here in his infinite wisdom to hear that, and I hope that he has also brought thee here that thou mayest accept it, and so go thy way altogether changed. Some three years ago I was talking with an aged minister, and he began fumbling about in his waistcoat pocket, but he was a long while before he found what he wanted. At last he brought out a letter that was well nigh worn to pieces, and he said, "God Almighty bless you! God Almighty bless you!" And I said, "Friend, what is it?" He said, "I had a son. I thought he would be the stay of my old age, but he disgraced himself, and he went away from me, and I could not tell where he went, only he said he was going to America. He took a ticket to sail for America from the London Docks, but he did not go on the particular day that he expected." This aged minister bade me read the letter, and I read it, and it was like this:—"Father, I am here in America. I have found a situation, and God has prospered me. I write to ask your forgiveness for the thousand wrongs that I have done you, and the grief I have caused you, for, blessed be God, I have found the Saviour. I have joined the church of God here, and hope to spend my life in God's service. It happens thus: I did not sail for America the day I expected. I went down to the Tabernacle to see what it was like, and God met with me. Mr. Spurgeon said, 'Perhaps there is a runaway son here. The Lord call him by his grace.' And he did." "Now," said he, as he folded up the letter and put it in his pocket, "that son of mine is dead, and he is in heaven, and I love you, and I shall do so as long as I live, because you were the means of bringing him to Christ?" Is there a similar character here to-night? I feel persuaded there is—somebody of the same sort; and in the name of God I charge him to take the warning that I give him from this pulpit. I dare you to go out of this place as you came in. Oh, young man, the Lord in mercy

gives you another opportunity of turning from the error of your ways, and I pray you now here—as you now are—lift your eye to heaven, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and he will be so. Then go home to your father and tell him what the grace of God has done for you, and wonder at the love which brought you here to bring you to Christ.

Dear friend, if there is nothing mysterious about it, yet here we are. We are where the gospel is preached, and that brings responsibility upon us. If a man is lost, it is better for him to be lost without hearing the gospel, than to be lost as some of you will be if you perish under the sound of a clear, earnest enunciation of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. How long halt some of you between two opinions? "Have I been so long time with you," says Christ, "and yet hast thou not known me?" All this teaching and preaching and invitation, and yet dost thou not turn?

"O, God do thou the sinner turn,
Convince him of his lost estate."

Let him linger no longer, lest he linger till he rue his fatal choice too late. God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SERMON XVII.

"LOVEST THOU ME?"

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"—John xxi, 16.

THIS is a very short and simple text, and some would think it very easy to say all that can be said upon it, but indeed it is a very large text, and too full of meaning for me to attempt to expound it all. The words are few, but the thoughts suggested are very many; there are subtle meanings, too, in the original Greek well worth considering, and allusions which deserve to be followed out. I intend at this time to confine myself to one point, and to ask your consideration of one thought only. May the Spirit of God prepare our hearts for our meditation, and impress the truth upon them. My one point is this; *our Lord asked Peter whether he had a love to his person.* The inquiry is not concerning his love to the kingdom of God, or the people of God, but it begins and ends with his love to the Son of God. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou *me?*" He does not say, "Dost thou now perceive the prudence of my warnings when I bade thee watch and pray? Simon, son of Jonas, wilt thou henceforth cease from thy self-confidence, and take heed to my admonitions?" It is not even, "Do you now believe my doctrines? Do you not trust in one whom the other day you denied?" Neither is it asked, "Are you pleased with my precepts? Are you a

believer in my claims? Will you still confess me to be the Son of the Highest?" No, these matters are not brought under question, but the one inquiry is, "Lovest thou me? Hast thou a personal attachment for me, to my very self?" He calls him by his old, unconverted name, Simon, son of Jonas, to remind him of what grace had done for him, and then he asks only about his love. The question deals with *personal attachment to a personal Christ,* and that is my sole subject.

Observe that our ever wise and tender Saviour questioned Peter about his love in plain set terms. There was no beating about the bush, he went at once to the point, for it is not a matter about which ambiguity and doubt can be endured. As the physician feels his patient's pulse to judge his heart, so the Lord Jesus tested at once the pulse of Peter's soul. He did not say, "Simon, son of Jonas, dost thou repent of thy folly?" Repentance is a very blessed grace, and very needful, but it was wiser to look at once to Peter's love, because it is quite certain that if a disciple loves his master he will deeply grieve for ever having denied him. The Lord does not even ask his follower as to his faith, which might well have been put under question, for he had with oaths said, "I know not the man." It would have been a highly important question, but it was answered when Peter avowed his love, for he who loves believes, and no man can love a Saviour in whom he does not believe. The Lord left every other point out of consideration, or perhaps I ought rather to say concentrated every other point into this one inquiry—"Lovest thou me?" Learn from this fact that one thing is needful; love to Jesus is the chief, the vital point to look to.

This question the Lord asked three times, as if to show that it is of the first, of the second, and of the third importance; as if it comprised all else, and therefore he would again, and again insist upon it, as orators dwell with repetitions and emphatic sentences upon topics which they would urge

home upon their auditors. This nail was meant to be well fastened, for it is smitten on the head with blow after blow. With unvarying tone and look the Lord enquired, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" It shows what weight our Saviour attached to the matter of his love, that he asked him about *that* about *that only* and about *that three times over.* When you are examining yourselves look mainly to your hearts, and make thorough inquisition into your love. Is Jesus really loved by you? Have you a deep attachment to his person? Whatever else you trifle with, be earnest here.

Remember that the Lord Jesus himself asked the question, and he asked it until he grieved Peter. So long as he was but recognized as a disciple Peter must have felt ready to receive the severest possible rebuke, and think himself gently done by; therefore it was not easy to grieve him. Our Lord also was slow at all times to cause pain to any true heart; yet on this occasion, for wise reasons, he reiterated his inquiry till he touched Peter's unhealed wounds and made them smart. Had he not made his Master's heart bleed, and was it not fit that he should feel heart-wounds himself? A threefold denial demanded a threefold confession, and the grief he had caused was fitly brought to his memory by the grief he felt. Now, this morning, if I press this question until I grieve some of you, till I grieve myself also, I shall not be censurable for having done so. To comfort you would be a good work, but sometimes it may be better to grieve you. Not always is sweet food the best thing we can bring you, bitter medicine is sometimes more requisite. I shall not have pushed the question beyond its legitimate sphere if I should so present it as to stir your hearts even to anguish. True love has more or less of pain about it; only the mere pretender passes through the world without anxious inquiry and heart-searching. Better far that you should be grieved to-day, and be found right at last, than that you should presumptuously feel yourselves secure, and be deceivers in the end.

We remarked that the question was put by our Lord himself. What if the Lord Jesus should meet you to-day, and should say to each one of you, "Lovest thou me?" If the question came at the end of one of our sermons, or just as we had done teaching, I should not wonder if it startled us. Found, as we are, in his house, having just sung sweet hymns in his honor, having united in prayer, and heartily joined in his worship, it would seem strange to be questioned as to our love to him, and yet it would not be unnecessary. Imagine, then, that your Lord has found you quite alone, and is standing before you; think of him touching you with his hand, and gently enquiring, "After all, lovest thou me?" How would you feel under such a question? Would you not be struck with it, and perhaps with shame begin to tremble and think over a dozen reasons why such a searching question was suggested to you just now. And if the Lord were to repeat it three times, and each time put it distinctly to you, and to you only, would you not feel great searchings of heart? Yet would I have you so receive the question. Let it come to you now as from Jesus. Forget that it is spoken by the minister, or written in the text. Hear it only as spoken by Jesus, by that same Jesus who has redeemed you from death and hell by his most precious blood. He addresses it to you rather than to others,—is there not a cause? Singling you out of the company, he gazes on you fixedly, and says, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest *thou* me?"—you know why there is such cause to question you. Answer for yourself alone, for he puts the enquiry only to you. Never mind Nathanael now, nor Thomas, nor the two sons of Zebedee—"Lovest *thou* me? Really, truly does thy heart beat true toward Jesus of Nazareth? Come, Peter, yes or no? Thou sayest 'Yes,' but is it so? Is it so?" I want the enquiry to come to my own soul and to yours this morning, as if Jesus really stood before each one of us, and again said, "Lovest thou me?" May the Lord grant us grace to make solemn

enquiry as to this matter, to bear honest witness, and to give a true deliverance, which shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

I. Our first observation shall be this—LOVE TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST MAY BE ABSENT FROM OUR BOSOMS. Unhappy thought, and yet most certainly true! Even in *our* hearts there may be no love to Christ! I know of nothing which can screen any one of us from the necessity of the question. Our gifts and apparent graces may prevent our fellow creatures questioning us, but nothing should prevent our questioning ourselves, for certainly there is nothing which will prevent the Lord himself from putting the inquiry to us.

No outward religiousness renders the inquiry needless. Are we professors of religion, are we very constant in attending to outward forms of worship? Do we enter very heartily into all the public exercises of God's house? Yes, but there are thousands who do that, hundreds of thousands who do that every Lord's-day, and yet they do not love Christ! My brethren, are not multitudes wrapped up in forms and ceremonies? If the service pleases the eye and the ear, are they not quite content? Love to the person of Christ has not occurred to the mass of avowed worshippers of Jesus. We know others to whom the end-all and be-all of religion is an orthodox statement of doctrine. So long as the preaching is according to the confession of faith, and every word and act is piously correct, they are well pleased; but no love to Jesus ever stirs their bosoms; religion to them is not an exercise of the heart at all—it is mere brain work, and hardly that. They know nothing of the living soul going out toward a living person, a bleeding heart knit to another bleeding heart, a life subsisting on another life and enamored of it. We know brethren who carry this very far, and if the preacher differs from them in the merest shade, they are overwhelmed with pious horror at his unsoundness, and they cannot hear

him again: even if he preach Christ most preciously in all the rest of his discourse, it is nothing, because he cannot sound their "Shibboleth." What is orthodoxy without love, but a catacomb to bury religion in. It is a cage without a bird; the gaunt skeleton of a man out of which the life has fled. I am afraid that the general current of church life runs too much toward externals, and too little toward deep burning love to the person of Christ. If you preach much about emotional religion, and the heart-work of godliness, cold-blooded professors label you as rather mystical, and begin to talk of Madame Guyon and the danger of the Quietist school of religion. We would not mind having a little spice of that, even if we were blamed for it, for after all the realizing of Christ is the grand thing. The faith which is most blessed is faith which deals most fully with the person of Jesus Christ; the truest repentance is that which weeps at a sight of his wounds, and the love which is most sweet is love to the adorable person of the Well-beloved. I look upon the doctrines of grace as my Lord's garments, and they smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. I look upon his precepts as his sceptre, and it is a rod tipped with silver; and I delight to touch it and find comfort in its power. I look upon the gospel ordinances as the throne upon which he sits, and I delight in that throne of ivory overlaid with pure gold; but oh, his person is sweeter than his garments, dearer than his sceptre, more glorious than his throne; he himself is altogether lovely, and to love HIM is the very heart's core of true religion. But perhaps you may not love HIM after all. You may have all the externals of outward religiousness, and yet the secret of the Lord may not be with you. It will be vain to reverence the Sabbath if you forget the Lord of the Sabbath; vain to love the sanctuary but not the Great High Priest; vain to love the wedding-feast but not the Bridegroom. Do you love HIM? that is the question. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou *me?*"

Nor, brethren, would the highest office in the church render it unnecessary to ask the question. Peter was an apostle, and not a whit behind the very chief of them. In some respects he was a foundation stone of the church, and yet it was needful to say to him, "Lovest thou me?" For there was once an apostle who did not love the Lord; there was an apostle who coveted twenty pieces of silver,—a goodly price was that at which he sold his Master. The name of Judas should sound the death-knell of all presumptuous confidence in our official standing. We may stand very high in the church and yet fall to our destruction. Our names may be in the list of religious leaders and yet they may not be written in the Lamb's book of life. So my brother minister, deacon, or elder, it is needful to put to ourselves the question, "Lovest thou the Lord?"

The enjoyment of the greatest Christian privileges does not render this question unnecessary. Peter and James and John were the three most favored of all the apostles: they witnessed certain of our Lord's miracles which were done in secret, and beheld of no other human eyes. They beheld him on the mount of transfiguration in all his glory, and they saw him in the garden of Gethsemane in all his agony, and yet though thus favored, their Lord felt it needful to ask of their leader "Lovest thou me?" O my brother, you have had high enjoyments, you have been on Tabor, illuminated with its transporting light, and you have also had fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, or at any rate you think you have. You are familiar alike with inward agonies and spiritual joys: you have been the familiar of the Lord and eaten bread with him, and yet remember there was one who did this and yet lifted up his heel against him, and therefore it is needful to say to you, my brother, "Lovest thou the Lord?" Dost thou really love him after all? for it is not certain that thou dost so because of what thou hast seen and enjoyed. It is easy to invent a remarkable experience, but

the one thing needful is a loving heart. Take heed that ye have this.

Nor, my dear brethren, *does the greatest warmth of zeal prevent the necessity of this question.* Peter was a redhot disciple. How ready he was both to do and to dare for his Master. How impetuously he cried when he was on the lake of Galilee, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water." What daring! What faith! What vehement zeal! And here, too, in the narrative before us, when the Lord was by that selfsame sea of Tiberias, Peter, in his headlong zeal, cannot wait until the boat touches the shore, but he girds on his fisher's coat and plunges in to meet the Master whom he loves; and yet, with that headlong zeal before him, the Lord says, "Lovest thou me?" Yes, young man, you are earnest in the Sunday-school, you have sought the conversion of the little ones and succeeded above many; you encourage others and give impetus to every movement in which you engage: and yet you need to enquire whether you do in very deed love the Lord or no. Perhaps, my dear brother, you stand up in the corners of the streets, and face the ungodly throng and delight to talk of Jesus, whether men oppose or no; yet are you sure you love Jesus? My sister, you visit the poor and care for the needy, you lay yourself out to do good to young people, and are full of warmth in all things which concern the Redeemer's cause. We admire you, and hope your zeal will never grow less; but for all that, even to you must the question be put, "Lovest thou the Lord Jesus?" For there is a zeal which is fed by regard to the opinions of others, and sustained by a wish to be thought earnest and useful; there is a zeal which is rather the warmth of nature than the holy fire of grace: this zeal has enabled many to do great things, and yet, when they have done all, they have been as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, because they did not love Jesus Christ. The most zealous actions, though they naturally lead us to hope that those who

perform them are lovers of Jesus, are not conclusive evidence thereof, and therefore we must still enquire, "Lovest thou the Lord?"

Ay, dear friends, and I will go a little further; *the greatest self-denial does not prove it.* Peter could say, "Lord, we have left all and followed thee." Though it was not very much, yet it was all Peter had, and he had left it all for the good cause, without having gained any earthly good in return. He had been frequently abused and reproached, for Jesus' sake, and he expected to be reproached still more, yet was he loyal, and willing to suffer to the end: yet the Lord, knowing all that Peter had sacrificed for his sake, nevertheless said to him, "Lovest thou me?" For sadly, strangely true it is, that men have made considerable sacrifices to become professed Christians, and yet have not had the root of the matter in them. Some have even been put into prison for the truth, and yet have not been sincere Christians, and it is not for us to say, but it is to be feared that in the martyr days some have given their bodies to be burned, yet because they had not love, it profited them nothing. Love is essential. Nothing can compensate for its absence. And yet this precious thing may not be in your hearts! O God, I tremble as I remember that perhaps it is not in mine. Let each one hear the question "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

I must press the point still a little further. It is often necessary for us to put this question, because there are other points of religion besides the emotional. Man is not all heart, he has a brain, and the brain is to be consecrated and sanctified. It is therefore, right that we should study the Word of God and become well instructed scribes in the kingdom of heaven. Peter went to college three years, with Jesus Christ for a tutor, and he learned a great deal, as who would not from so great a teacher? But after he had been through his course, his Master, before he sent him to his life-work, felt it

needful to inquire, "Lovest thou me?" Brother, you may turn over the pages of your book, you may digest doctrine after doctrine, you may take up theological propositions and problems, and you may labor to solve this difficulty and expound that text, and meet the other question, till, somehow or other, the heart grows as dry as the leaves of the volume, and the book-worm feeds on the soul as well as the paper, eating its way into the spirit. It is, therefore, a healthy thing for the Lord to come into the study and close the book, and say to the student, "Sit still a while, and let me ask thee, 'Lovest thou me?' I am better than all books and studies; hast thou a warm, human, living love to me?" I hope many of you are very diligent students—if you teach in the Sunday-school you ought to be, if you preach in the streets or in cottage meetings you ought to be. How shall you fill others if you are not full yourselves? But at the same time look most of all to the condition of your heart toward Christ. To know is good, but to love is better. If thou wilt study thou canst solve all problems; yet if thou lovest not, thou hast failed to comprehend the mystery of mysteries, and to know the most excellent of sciences. Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up. Look well, then, to the question, "Lovest thou me?" Much of Christian life also ought to be spent in active labor. We are to be up and doing. If there was anything to do, Peter was the man to do it. He had gone forth to preach the gospel, and even the devils had been subject to him; Peter had wrought marvels in Jesus' name, and he was ordained to work yet greater wonders. Yet, despite all that Peter had done, his love needed to be examined. Even though those feet of Peter's had walked the sea, which no man's feet had done besides, yet Peter must be asked, "Lovest thou me?" He had just dragged that huge net to the shore with that host of fishes, a hundred and fifty and three. With great skill and mighty effort he had drawn the whole shoal on shore,

yet this did not prove his love. There are preachers of the gospel among us who have dragged a full net to shore, the great fishes have been many; they have been great and successful workers, but this does not prevent its being needful for the Lord to examine them as to their hearts. He bids them put by their nets for awhile and commune with him. Shut up the church book; fold up the roll of membership and have done counting your fishes. Come into your chamber apart. Jesus means to ask you something. "In my name you have cast out devils, but did you love me? You cast the net on the right side of the ship, as I told you, but did you love me? You drew to shore that shoal of fishes, but did you love *me?*" Brethren, this is the solemn fear, "Lest after having preached to others I myself should be a castaway." Lest after bringing others to Jesus, and serving God well in the school, or in some other sphere, you should, nevertheless, make a dead failure of it, because you have not loved Jesus himself. I must press the question again and again, and I do pray the Holy Spirit to let its power be felt by every one of us.

Possibly we may have been called to contend earnestly for the faith, and we may have been battling with the King's enemies on this side and on that, and standing up for the truth even as for dear life. It is well to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, for this age wants men who are not afraid to bear reproach for speaking out the truth, with strong, stern words; but to this spirit it is more than ever important that the question should come, "Lovest thou me?" A man may be a very firm Protestant, but may not love Christ; he may be a very earnest advocate of divine truth, but he may not love him who is the truth itself; he may maintain Scriptural views as to baptism, and yet he may never have been baptized into Christ. A man may be a staunch Nonconformist, and may see all the evils against which Nonconformity is a protest, but still he may be conformed to the world, and be lost

notwithstanding all his dissent. It is a grand thing for every Christian warrior to look well to this breastplate, and to see that he can promptly reply to the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Putting all together, let me say to you,—Beloved, however eminent you may be in the church of God, and however distinguished for services or for suffering, yet do not evade this question. Bare your bosoms to the inspection of your Lord. Answer him with humble boldness while he says to you again and again, even till he grieves you, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

II. We will now turn to a second head. WE MUST LOVE THE PERSON OF CHRIST, OR ALL OUR PAST PROFESSIONS HAVE BEEN A LIE. It is not possible for that man to be a Christian who does not love Christ. Take the heart away, and life is impossible. Your very first true hope of heaven came to you, if it ever did come at all, by Jesus Christ. Beloved, you heard the gospel, but the gospel apart from Christ was never good news to you; you read the Bible, but the Bible apart from a personal Christ was never anything more than a dead letter to you; you listened to many earnest entreaties, but they all fell on a deaf ear until Jesus came and compelled you to come in. The first gleam of comfort that ever entered my heart flashed from the wounds of the Redeemer; I never had a hope of being saved until I saw him hanging on the tree in agonies and blood. And because our earliest hope is bound up, not with any doctrine or preacher, but with Jesus, our all in all, therefore I am sure, even if we have only lately received our first hope, we must love Jesus, from whom it has come. Nor do we merely begin with him, for every covenant blessing we have received has been connected with his person, and could not be received apart from him. You have obtained pardon, but that pardon was through his blood. You have been clothed in righteousness, but he is the Lord your Righteousness, he is himself your glory and your

beauty. You have been cleansed from many sins by conversion, but it was the water from his riven side which washed you. You have been made the child of God, but your adoption has only made you feel more akin to the Elder Brother, through whom you are made heirs of God. The blessings of the covenant are none of them separate from Christ, and cannot be enjoyed apart from him, any more than light and heat can be divided from the sun. All blessings come to us from his pierced hand, and hence if we have received them we must love him; it is not possible to have enjoyed the golden gifts of his unbounded love without being moved to love him in return. You cannot walk in the sun without being warmed, nor receive of Christ's fulness without being filled with gratitude.

Every ordinance of the Christian church since we have been converted has either been a mockery, or else we have loved Christ in it. Baptism, for instance, what is it but the mere washing away of the filth of the flesh and nothing more, unless we were buried with Christ in baptism unto death; that like as he also rose from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we also might rise to newness of life? The Lord's Supper, what is it? What but a common meal for the eating of bread and the drinking of wine, unless Christ be there? But if we have come to the Lord's Supper as true men, and not as false-hearted hypocrites, we have eaten his flesh and drunk his blood, and is it possible to have done that and not to love him? It cannot be. That communion with Christ which is absolutely essential to ordinances is also sure to produce in the heart love toward him with whom we commune. And so, beloved, it has been with every approach we have made toward God in all the long years of our Christain life. Did you pray, my brother? did you really speak with God in prayer? You could not have done it except through Jesus the Mediator, and if you have spoken to God through the Mediator, you cannot remain without love to one who has

been your door of access to the Father. If you have made a profession of religion, how can it be a true and honest one unless your heart burns with attachment to the Great Author of salvation? You have great hopes, but what are you hoping for? Is not all your hope wrapped up in him? Do you not expect that when he shall appear you shall be like him? You are hoping to die triumphantly, but not apart from his making your dying bed soft as a pillow of down. You are hoping to rise again, but not apart from his resurrection, for he is the first fruit of the resurrection harvest. You expect to reign upon earth, but it is *with him;* you do not expect a millennium apart from the King. You expect a never-ending heaven, but that heaven is to be with Jesus where he is, and to behold his glory. Since, then, everything that you have obtained—if indeed you have received it of the Lord at all—has Christ's name stamped on it, and comes to you direct from his pierced hand, it cannot be that you have received it unless you love him. Now, when I put the question, recollect that upon your answer to it hangs this alternative—a hypocrite or a true man, a false professor or a genuine convert, a child of God or an heir of wrath. Therefore answer the inquiry, but answer it with deliberation, answer it conscientiously, as though you stood before the bar of him who now so tenderly enquires of you, but who will then speak in other tones, and look with other glances, even with those eyes which are like a flame of fire. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?

III. Our third consideration is this—WE MUST HAVE LOVE TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST, OR NOTHING IS RIGHT FOR THE FUTURE. We have not finished life yet—much of pilgrimage may possibly lie before us. Now, all will go right if we love Christ, but nothing can proceed as it should do if love to Jesus be absent. For instance: Peter is called to feed the lambs and feed the sheep; but for a true pastor the first qualification is love to Christ. I gather from this incident, and I am sure

I do not press it unduly, that Jesus Christ, meaning to make Peter a feeder of his lambs and sheep, acts as a trier to see whether he has the proper qualifications, and he does not so much inquire about Peter's knowledge of gifts of utterance, as about his love; for the first, second, and third qualification for a true pastor is a loving heart. Now, mark you, what is true of a pastor is true of every useful worker for Christ. Love is essential, my dear friend; you cannot work for Christ if you do not love him. "But I can teach in the school," says one. "No, not as school should be taught, without love to Jesus." "But I am connected with an interesting society, which is doing much good." "But you are not glorifying God unless you are connected with that society because you love Jesus Christ." Put down your tools, for you cannot work profitably in my Lord's vineyard unless your heart loves him: his vines had better be untrimmed than be pruned by angry hands. Let the lambs alone, sir, you will never rear them if your heart is hard and ungentle. If you do not love the Master, you will not love his work, or his servants, or the rules of his house, and we can do better without you than with you. To have an unloving worker grumbling about the Lord's house and vineyard would be distressing to the whole family. Love must be in the heart, or true service cannot come from the hands.

Then, again, perhaps suffering lies before you: and if your heart is not true to Christ, you will not be able patiently to endure for his name's sake. Before long, the time came for Peter to glorify God by death. Peter has to be girded and to be taken whither he would not. Now Peter cannot be fit for martyrdom if he does not love Jesus. Tradition says that he was crucified with his head downward, because he felt it too much honor to be put to death in the same position as his Lord. It may be so; no doubt he was put to death by crucifixion, and it was his strong deep love which made him more than a conqueror. Love makes the

hero. When the Spirit of God inflames love he inspires courage. See then, O believers, how much you need love for the future. Young Christian, you will have to run the gauntlet before you enter heaven. I do not mind what sphere of life you occupy, you are very particularly favored if somebody does not mock at you, and persecute you. Between here and heaven you will be tried, and peradventure your foes will be the men of your own household. Many will watch for your halting, and even place stumbling-blocks in your way : to walk securely you will need to carry the fires of love in your heart. If you do not love Jesus intensely sin will get the mastery over you. Self-denials and humiliations which would be easy with love will be impossible without it. Rightly to work or to suffer, or to die, we must love Jesus with all our hearts.

Look you, my brethren, if we have no love for Jesus Christ's person our piety lacks the *adhesive element*, it fails in that which will help us to stick to the good old way to the end, and hold out to the end. Men often leave what they like ; men can deny what they merely believe as a matter of mental conviction, but they will never deny that which they feel to be true, and accept with heartfelt affection. If you are to persevere to the end, it must be in the power of love.

Love is the great *inspiriting force.* Many a deed in the Christian life is impossible to every thing but love. In serving Christ you come across a difficulty far too great for judgment, far too hard for prudence, and unbelief sits down and weighs and calculates, but love, mighty love, laughs at the impossibility and accomplishes it for Jesus Christ. Love breaks through troops, love leaps over walls, and hand-in-hand with faith she is all but omnipotent ; nay, through the power of God which is upon her, she can do all things for Jesus Christ her Lord. If you lack love your energy is gone ; the force which nerves the man and subdues his foes is lacking.

Without love, too, you are without the *transforming force.* Love to Christ is that which makes us like him. The eyes of love, like windows, let in the Saviour's image, and the heart of love receives it as upon a sensitive plate, until the whole nature bears its impress. You are like that which you love, or you are growing like it. If Christ be loved you are growingly becoming like him; but without love you will never bear the image of the heavenly. O, Spirit of God, with wings of love brood over us, till Christ is formed in us.

My brethren, there is one other reflection—without love to Christ we lack *the perfecting element.* We are to be with him soon; in a few more weeks or months, none of us can tell how few, we shall be in the glory. Yes, you and I; many of us shall be wearing the white robes and bearing the palm branches. We shall only buy two or three more almanacs, at the outside, and then we shall keep no more reckoning of days, for we shall be where time, with its little eddies and currents, shall be forgotten in the eternal flow of the ages. But if we have not love to Jesus we shall not be where he is. There are none in heaven that have not first learned to love him here below. So we must have love to Jesus, the future imperiously demands it, and therefore I put the question with all the greater seriousness and vehemence, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

IV. But now I will suppose I have received an answer from you, and you are able to say you do love Jesus; then my fourth and closing head must be, IF WE DO LOVE HIM, WHAT THEN? Why then, if we do love him, let us do something for him directly, for Jesus Christ replied to Peter the moment he said, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee,"—"Feed my sheep." Very kind it was of the Saviour, because he knew from his own heart that wherever there is love there is a desire for activity. Because Jesus loved so much therefore it became his meat and his drink to do the will of his heavenly Father. So thinks Jesus—"Peter

loves me, and his heart will ache if I do not give him something to do. Go and feed my lambs, go and feed my sheep." Brother, sister, if you love Christ, do not idle away this Sunday afternoon. If you love Christ, get to work. What are you doing? Attending the means of grace and getting a good feed. Is that all? Well, that is doing something for yourself. Many people in the world are very busy at feeding, among the most active with knife and fork, but I do not know that eating a man's bread is any proof of love to him. A great many professing Christians give no proof of love to Christ, except that they enjoy sermons. But now, if you love Jesus Christ as you say you do, prove it by doing good to others—"Feed my sheep." I see a company of brethren met together to hold a conference and to grow in grace. Very excellent indeed: grow away, brethren, as fast as ever you can—I like to see you as a flower garden, all a-growing, all a-blowing. But when you have done all that, I pray you do not congratulate yourselves as though you had done a mighty fine thing, because there is nothing in it unless it leads you to work for others. To publish accounts of such happy gatherings is like telling the poor people of Whitechapel that the Mayor and Aldermen had a fine banquet of turtle soup. Suppose I read that you have had a splendid series of meetings; well, I am glad you enjoyed yourselves; but the point is this—if there is anything in it, get to work. If you love Christ, feed his sheep and lambs. If it is not all talk, if it is not all much ado about nothing, if it is not all fuss, get to soul winning, get down among the poor and needy, get down among the lost and wandering, get down among the dark and ignorant, and hold forth Jesus Christ as the Balm of Gilead and the Saviour of sinners. After all, this is the *test* of how much you have grown in grace—this is the proof of how much you have become like Jesus. What will you do for him? for if you do not go now and feed his sheep, and feed his lambs, it does not matter what you say

or what you think you enjoy, you do not give that proof of love which Jesus asks for.

I put it in this final word;—when next you teach your classes, or your own families, do it for love of Jesus. Say to your heart, "I do love Christ, and now I am going to teach for love of him." Oh, there will be a grand class this afternoon, my sister, you will get on mightily if you teach for love of him, every word you say will be powerful since it is suggested by love of him. That girl who makes so much noise, and troubles you so much, you will bear with for love of him. That restless young urchin, you cannot get the truth into him,—you tell him many tales, and when you have done he wants another; you will patiently give him another, for the love of Christ. When you pray with the little ones, pray because you love them for Christ's sake. You are going to preach, do the preaching for love of Christ. We sometimes do it because it is our turn to do it, but it should never be so. You know how delightfully servants will wait upon you if they do it for love. You have been out for a few weeks, and at last you come home. Look at the room! What a welcome is before you! They have half devastated the garden to bring in the flowers to make the table look nice for you. That supper—well, it is just the same supper that any Mary or Jane would have cooked, but see how it is put upon the table! Everything seems to say it is done for love of master and mistress, to show our affection and respect for them, and you enjoy it indescribably, because it tells of love. Now, tomorrow, and as long as ever you live, do everything out of love to Christ. It will spread flowers over your work, and make it look beautiful in his eyes. Put love's fingers to work, love's brains, love's eyes, love's hands; think with love, pray with love, speak with love, live with love, and in this way you will live with power, and God will bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

MY GOD.

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My God."—Psalm xci. 2.

IF you were to find honey in a wood, and should wish to give some of it to your friends, I can imagine your cautiously taking it up in your hands, and carrying it very carefully, and yet when you reach the company you would find, to your sorrow, that a large part of it had oozed out between your fingers, so that you had failed to convey to others what was so delicious to yourself. I fear I shall be in a like condition when this sermon is done, and therefore I am the more eager to assure you at the beginning that the honey which I wish you to partake of is indeed of the very richest kind. My text has been to my own heart sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. Have you been in the Alps, or in some other region where the scenery is peculiarly impressive, and has there happened a singular conjunction of sun and cloud, of brightness and shadow, which has made the view before you to be transcendantly sublime, or surpassingly beautiful? If so, when you have reached your companions you have tried to tell them what you have seen: but in proportion as the scene has been exquisite and charming, you have been conscious of your inability to convey to them any satisfactory idea of the spectacle. If it had been a commonplace affair

you could have accomplished the description and conveyed your impression of it to other minds; but on account of its being so altogether superior and out of the common way, you have failed after the most earnest endeavors to succeed, you have exclaimed, "Ah, you should have been there yourselves. Had you seen with your own eyes you would then have understood my descriptions: but now the task of description is hopeless. Had you been there you would have known that I do not exaggerate; on the contrary, you would have felt that when I have spoken under the greatest excitement I have fallen far short of the admiration which the scene awakens." It happens to me in happy hours that a text of Scripture becomes peculiarly delicious to my heart, even as marrow and fatness to the feaster; and these two words have been so. They filled my spirit with sweetness even to the full; but I fear that I cannot convey that sweetness to you. I have seen in these two words such a wonderful display of divine condescension, of the Lord's favor to his chosen, and of the intense delight which springs out of that condescension and favor, that had I but been in the pulpit at the time I could have preached with freedom, but now I do not find it so easy: expression limps to-day where enjoyment leaped yesterday. However, may God the Holy Spirit help you to see in the text what I have seen in it, even if I cannot point it out to you, and then our meditation will be remarkably delightful and pleasant to us. May the Spirit of God bring fulness of meaning out of the text to your understandings and to your hearts; and may we all rejoice together as we go out of this Tabernacle, each one of us saying "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul."

I. First let us think of these TWO WORDS TOGETHER. And to get at them let us see when they have occurred in sacred history:—let us consider the most remarkable and special occasions upon which children of God have used these two words together, and have said "My God."

First, this is *the young convert's early confession.* The instance we will give is Ruth, who lovingly said to Naomi, "Where thou dwellest I will dwell: where thou goest I will go: where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." That last resolution was the avowal of a spiritual change. She might have been determined to lodge, and to abide with her mother-in-law, and there would have been but little in it; but when it came to this—"Thy God shall be *my* God," then there was hope that she had been delivered by the grace of God from the bondage of idolatry, and had come to put her trust under the wings of Jehovah, the living God. Ah, dear young converts, if the Lord has revealed your sinful estate to you, and has led you to Jesus Christ to find life and salvation, you will come forward and give yourself to the Lord, and declare, "I will be thy servant, for thou art my God."

> "Lord, thou art mine, forever mine,
> My heart is filled with joy divine;
> Henceforth thou shalt my treasure be,
> And I will find my all in thee."

You will next give yourself to the church according to the will of God, and you will tell the church that you do so because henceforth the God of the church and the God of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be your God. You mean to dwell with the Lord's people and live and die with them, for their God is your God.

Some of you have lately been converted, or profess to have been so; I trust your profession is thoroughly truthful, but be sure you examine yourselves. Have you taken God to be your God? Not to be a mere name to you, nor as a sacred word to sing about and pray about—but as truly *God* to you. Is God in very deed your *God?* for if he be he will rule your soul, he will dominate your whole spirit, and sway his sceptre over your whole heart. No man is

truly converted until God takes his right place in relationship to him. The wicked forget God, the men of Belial defy God, the infidel defies God, but the child of God owns God, submits to his authority, and gives him the throne of his heart. He does not give the Lord a secondary place, and permit self to be first, for that would be to deify self and insult the Lord; but he makes God to be *God*, that is first and sole in authority and power. This is a sure index of true conversion—when God is *God* in your soul. As I have already said, God is not God to a great many, he is but a name and nothing more to them; but when he becomes *God*—and it is a great word that—when he takes the place which the Creator, the Redeemer, the God should occupy, then is the soul converted indeed. Now, whether we were converted yesterday, or have known the Lord for twenty, thirty, or forty years, I trust we can address our mother, the church, and say as Ruth said to Naomi, "Where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

These words, in the next place, may be regarded as *the statement of the Christian's belief:* I mean here not merely his confession of it, but his after statement of it. Here is our creed and our confession of faith. Take Thomas for our illustration. He has been very sceptical. Poor Thomas! He seems to have had too much brain and too little heart; he was always for fighting his way through intricate questions and for answering tough objections; had he been alive now, if the grace of God had not improved him, he would have been a "modern thought" divine, a critical brother suggesting more problems than all the rest of us could solve. He must have tokens, marks, and evidences, or else he will not believe; but he is highly indulged, and the Saviour permits him to put his fingers into the prints of the nails, and his hand into his side, and when he has done so, Thomas by a strange and blessed logic infers

the deity of Christ from his wounds. He was the first, I believe, who had ever done so, but certainly not the last, and having from the very wounds of his Lord's body inferred his deity, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" In this plain, decided testimony to our Lord's divinity we all unite. It is the heartfelt confession of faith of every Christian in reference to the Lord Jesus; there is no room for two opinions on that point. If there be any professing Christians in this world who do not call Christ their God—well, brethren, we are sorry for them, and pray the Lord to give them spiritual life and light; but as for us, the Man who bled on Calvary is "very God of very God" to us, and that in the broadest and deepest sense. As the angels bow before him, so also do we; we count him "worthy to receive honor and power divine." There are many differences of opinion in the church of God which may be tolerated, but this is beyond all controversy and can never be a moot point. Here our protests against error must be firm and unmistakable. I admired a remark that was once very merrily made by good William Gadsby when a Unitarian chapel had been erected near a Baptist place of worship. The story has been told to me that some one in the vestry was greatly mourning over the circumstance, and saying what a sad opposition it was. Gadsby said, "Well, man, I do not see any opposition in it." "But surely it is a great opposition, Mr. Gadsby. They deny the deity of Christ." "Why man," said Gadsby, "that is no opposition. Suppose you kept a baker's shop, and sold good bread, and a man came and opened an ironmonger's shop opposite, would you call that an opposition? Certainly not, it is a different line altogether." And so it is. Where we preach the deity of Christ, that is one line of things; but where that is denied we cannot regard it as another form of Christianity; it is a different thing altogether, quite as different as iron would be from bread. The Socinian is nearer akin to the Mohammedan than to the

Christian. He who does not own the deity of Jesus disowns him altogether. I cannot see how Jesus Christ can be anything but one of two things—either the Son of God or else a gross impostor who allowed his disciples to think him divine, and used the virtues of his character to support his claim; all the worse an impostor because he had a fine moral sense, and yet employed even virtue's self to aid his blasphemous ambition. Either God or an arch-deceiver he must have been. Brethren, we will have no mincing of matters about that point. Charity is all very well, but truth comes first. "First pure, then peaceable," is a good rule for our judgment on such points. On the matter of our Lord's Godhead we cannot for an instant hesitate: we do not merely believe Jesus Christ to be God, but we risk our eternal future upon that truth. I am a lost man, I know, and for me there can be nothing but eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, if the Saviour, Christ, be not divine. *But he is divine.* This we will maintain in the teeth of all men as our confession of faith—Jesus Christ the Son of the Highest, very God of very God, is my Lord and *my God.*

Thus, then, *my God* is the first and last confession of faith of those who are under the new covenant; it is the utterance both of the babe in grace and of the more advanced Christian.

Furthermore, my brethren, the words, "My God," have often been used to declare *the determination of the believer when he has been surrounded by opponents and persecutors.* Grandly did old Micaiah use this expression when the false priests were round about him. Prophets who pretended to be inspired delivered their oracles, and old Micaiah said, "As the Lord *my God* liveth. Whatsoever *my God* saith unto me that will I speak." Neither less or more did he speak, because he believed in Jehovah as being his God, and submitted himself entirely to Jehovah's sway. The false worshipped Baal, Moloch, and Astaroth; but old Micaiah cared not what they worshipped, he knew who was his God,

and he avowed his God to their teeth. Oh, ye who call yourselves the people of God, be ready always to stand up for Jehovah in whatever company you may be; for there are many gods and many lords in our land at this day, and multitudes of professed Christians have turned aside from worshipping the God of Israel. They have set up new gods, and the Eternal is despised. The Old Testament, they tell us, is a revelation uncouth and harsh: the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob is not at all the God of their fancy, for he is too terrible, too severe, too righteous, too just. They want a milder, gentler God, and they pretend that Jesus Christ has revealed quite a different deity from the God of the Old Testament. Ah, brethren, in this they greatly err, for the Lord changeth not, and is the same to-day under the gospel as he was under the law. We believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "the God of the whole earth shall he be called." We worship the God of Israel, the God who made the heavens and the earth, the God who cleft the Red Sea, the God who spake in thunder from Sinai. We believe that Jesus Christ has not come to reveal to us a new deity, but to declare unto us the God who is from the beginning. Ours is the song of Zacharias: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began." "This God is our God forever and ever: he shall be our guide even unto death."

"The God of Abraham praise
Who reigns enthroned above,
Ancient of everlasting days,
And God of love!
Jehovah, Great I AM!
By earth and heaven confest;
I bow, and bless the sacred name,
Forever blest!"

The words "My God" may well express *the secret vow of the believer as he consecrates himself to the Most High:* of this we have an instance in the life of Jacob. He said, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace: then shall the Lord be *my God.*" We have each said that, I hope, many times, when we have renewed our vows unto the Lord. Though we have known the Lord for twenty or thirty years, yet, as we have needed him anew in time of trouble, or as he has revealed himself to us afresh in a way of deliverance, we have laid hold of him by faith over again and said, "Yes, he is *my God.*" Have you never felt your heart full to overflowing while thinking over such a text as this, "My Beloved is mine and I am his"? I do not know a more delightful contemplation for a quiet hour alone than to weigh each syllable of that promise, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Look it over, turn it over, taste it, feed on it, and digest it, and see the mutual possession, even as in those other texts, "The Lord's portion is his people," and "The Lord is my portion saith my soul." Christ is ours and we are Christ's. You cannot, dear friend, do better than oftentimes hand over the title-deed of your soul to God, yea, not of your soul only, but of everything you have, for if you make an inventory of all you have to the last penny, it is your Lord's. Even so is the Lord altogether yours, and you should often renew your grasp of him. Take him to be your only Lord and God as long as you live, and, while others boast in their treasures, be it your joy to cry, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee." Thus with two words, "*My God,*" we avow our faith both in the presence of our enemies and before our Lord himself.

But I cannot linger here. I must have you notice next, that these words, "My God," have sometimes afforded *the*

deepest possible comfort to children of God in times of terrible trouble. When our dear Lord and Master was in his greatest woe—when all the waves and billows of judgment were going over his soul, the exclamation which came from him at the climax of his grief was, "My God! My God!" True, it was attended with the question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" but still, as with a two-handed grip, he seemed to get hold of God when he said, "*My God! My God!*" Driven to extremity, he settled his heart on that one point. There was the anchor hold of his hope, "My God, my God." He did not say, "My disciples": they had all forsaken him. He could not call on his mother and brethren: they were powerless to console. No arm, angelic or human, could minister to his aid. He was alone in the grasp of death, unsupported and unsustained, forsaken of earth and heaven, and left a prey to the powers of darkness; but this—this was the cry which kept him alive, and gave him strength to bear even to the end. "My God," saith he, "they have not robbed me of thee. My God, I still appeal to thee. Though thou hide thy face and seem to forsake me, yet I know thou still art mine, and I hold thee fast to the end. My God! my God!" You will never have to use those words in so dire an extremity of woe; but if hereafter you ever come into deep waters, may you have grace to say, "My God," for if you do you will soon be enabled to shout, "It is finished." "My God," is a love note in times of peace, and a war cry for hours of battle; it is mighty in times of joy, but it is still more potent in nights of sorrow. The man who can say "My God," is a match for death and hell; by that watchword he shall master sin and overthrow all the hosts of the world, the flesh, and the devil. In this sign thou mayest conquer: the watchword of victory is, "My God."

Once more. *These words have been heard in cases precisely the opposite of deep distress.* When very marvellous

deliverances have been enjoyed, the expression "My God" has frequently come from the lips of those who have experienced them. When Miriam took her timbrel and went forth in the dance because God had overthrown Pharaoh and his hosts, she sung a song which Moses had composed for her, and you will remember that one of the verses was—"He is *my God*, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." She had never reached that point, "He is my God," until Pharaoh's hosts and his chosen captains had been drowned in the Red Sea: then she felt proud that she had such a God, and her faith exulted as she beheld his arm made bare. Think also of Daniel, and that happy moment when he exultingly called Jehovah his God. When the prophet had been all night in the lion's den, Darius comes, and with a plaintive cry he asks if Daniel yet lives. He is afraid the lions have devoured him. Do you notice Daniel's answer? He says, "*My God* has sent an angel, and hath shut the lions' mouth." You do not wonder that he said "My God," do you? I do not think he could have coolly said, "*God*—God hath sent his angel." He could not have spoken so coldly. The deliverance he had experienced, the great goodness of God in keeping him alive that night in the lions' den, made him feel that he must with arms of love and faith embrace the Omnipotent Preserver, and call him "My God." If you have seen your sins drowned in the Red Sea you have said, "My God," and if the lions have been chained, and you have escaped their jaws, you, too, have said, "My God." I earnestly hope that if the trouble which has now come upon you should prove to be sharper and more grievous than any before, it may turn out to have been sent in order that you may say "My God" with a deeper emphasis, and feel your soul more fully filled with the blessed meaning of those two matchless monosyllables.

So much, then, about the times when these words have been used. May the Spirit of God lead us to those special-

ties of experience in the midst of which these words shall become the frequent language of our hearts.

II. Briefly let us notice in the second place what means this FIRST WORD "MY"—"MY God." In what sense and respects can God be mine? He fills heaven and earth—can I call him mine? "His tender mercies are over all his works": I cannot set a hedge around his benevolence, or claim a monopoly of his compassion. How, then, can I call him mine? He is so inconceivable; he is boundless in nature; his every attribute is infinite. A man may call a province his own, for it is within his compass, he can travel over it, or sail round it: an emperor may call thousands of square miles his own, for, still, the eagle's pinion or the dove's light wing can soar from boundary to boundary of his empire. The broadest dominion may be mapped and measured; but how can I call that mine which I cannot even conceive? If my thought cannot compass it, shall my heart possess it? Yes, yes, so the text says. "My God." Love possesses what reason cannot even look upon.

Still, what means this daring appropriation? Why, it must mean this among other things: first, that *I own him to be my God.* Whatever gods others may have, Jehovah is God to me. To whomsoever Jehovah may be a name, he is God to me, and, as Father, Son, and Spirit, three persons in one blessed unity, I adore him. He may be despised and rejected; there may be other names set up in competition with him, but to me—*to me*—he is the only God. I wish that you in this assembly may all say at once, most heartily and distinctly,—"Let others do as they will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." I hope you will avow yourselves this day to be his people, and take the God of Israel, the God and Father of your Lord Jesus Christ, to be your God. That is a part of the meaning. There is an owning the Lord to be our God.

But, next, *the words imply a personal recognition of him.*

Venus and Jupiter and Bacchus, those ancient deities of Greece and Rome, we have all talked about them as myths and fictions, but as actual gods we ignore them, they are no gods to us. Some of us read classical books in our boyhood : I am sure they have done us more harm than good, but we have read them, and therefore we know all about the imaginary history and doings of those most disgusting gods and goddesses : but we are very well aware that they are dreams and falsehoods ; we know no such beings, they are nothing to us. We have heard also of Juggernauth, and of the thousand and millions of gods of Hindustan, but we have no acquaintance with them. I have felt thankful when I have seen likenesses of Krishna and Siva that they were no relations of mine. There is one god with an elephant's head, and another god with a cat's head : I am delighted to think that I never was on speaking terms with such monsters, and could never call them mine. If they be gods to others they are not so to us : we know them not, their names we despise, and their pretensions we detest. But, brethren, we know our God. It is true we have not seen him at any time. "Ye saw no similitude," said he, when he spake to his people from the top of Sinai. We have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape ; yet as spirits speak to spirits we have been cognizant of the action of the Spirit of God upon our spirits. You and I know that we have often been moved by one another's spirits. This very night while I am speaking my spirit is known of your spirit, and you are recognizing my spirit while I speak : in much the same way the Holy Spirit, by his mysterious operations, has come into contact with our spirits, so that though we know him not by sight, and hearing, and taste, and smell, all of which deceive us, yet we recognize him by an inner and infallible sense which was created in us at our regeneration by the hand of God. There is a God we know by spiritual perception. He has opened our ear so that we hear his voice ; he has given

us new sight by which we perceive him, and are even more assured of his presence than we could be if we had the evidence of our eyes and ears. He is not a God in cloudland to us, he is intensely real and true; he is a God with whom we speak: a God who calls himself our friend, our Father; a God who invites us to come and reason with him; a God who assures us of the love of his heart; a God who tells us his secrets, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." O men of the world, we are as sure of the existence of God and of his being ours as ever you can be sure of your gold or your lands, and we are as truly acquainted with him as you are with your friends. Hence it is that he is no longer simply God to me, but he is "*My* God." Just as when I know a man by familiar intercourse, he is not merely *a* friend, but he is "*my* friend," so has it come to pass between God and us; and by each believer he is fitly styled, "My God."

I hope the matter has proceeded farther than that. We not merely know that he is God, and have not only recognized his divine existence, but we have come *into relations with him.* There is a natural and necessary relation between God and his creatures; but it is not always recognized. When it is discerned by the soul, because the Spirit of God illuminates the heart, man rises into a new relationship to God, and feels as he never felt before. For instance, he comes into the relation of a pardoned child. Oh, if you have ever been forgiven you will know him that forgave you, and you will say, "My God." If you feel the Spirit of adoption now within your heart you will know who adopted you, and you will cry "My God, my Father." You receive of his bounty according to the gift of his grace from day to day, and therefore while consciously receiving abundant mercies from the Lord, you learn to say, "*My God* will supply all my needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

The pith of the matter lies in this. "My God" means

that *we have appropriated him to ourselves.* We take him by a daring act of faith to be henceforth God to us, and all that he is we take to be ours forever and ever. May we do this? Brethren, may we do this? Ah, yes, appropriating faith is warranted in the covenant, for the covenant runs thus: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." It is justified also by the act of God, for did he not give his Son? And when he gave his Son to redeem us could he withhold anything from us? Did he not in that act virtually give us himself, for Christ is in the Father, and the Father is in him, and he that hath received Jesus hath received the Father. Say "My Saviour," and you need not be afraid to say "My God." Moreover, not merely does the covenant warrant it, and the act of God justify it, but there is the witness of the Spirit within us, which hath taught us our right to say, "My God." When we have said unto the Lord, "Thou art my God," the Holy Spirit has not chided us, nor smitten our conscience, nor rebuked us for presumption, nor humbled us for pride on that account; but, on the contrary, peace has followed—calm rest, holy joy, quiet trustfulness, assured confidence, all of which are the true fruits of saying, "My God," and at the same time the genuine works of the Spirit of God. Thus we know that we have not erred when we have made this claim. Moreover, dear friends, we may expect our confidence and assured appropriation to become stronger and stronger as life goes on. We have not been wrong in saying, "My God," for we have grown into saying it more and more in proportion as the Lord has sanctified us. As we conquer sin, we say, "My God" more assuredly, and as we grow in grace we say, "My God" with greater confidence: therefore it cannot be wrong. We expect in heaven to say "My God" still more positively. Beloved, how boldly we shall say it there! No sin, no doubts, no clouds to divide us from him; then shall we know that the infinite Jehovah is ours to enjoy forever and ever. Oh, it

is not crowns of gold, it is not music of sweetest harps, it is not palm branches or white robes of victory that our souls will most delight themselves in: we shall triumph in 'God our exceeding joy." "At his right hand are pleasures forever more." We shall even in heaven find it bliss to say to ourselves, "God is mine." What God *does* is great, what God *has* is great, but what God *is* is far more than what he does or has, because he can do and have infinitely more than he ever has done or has created; yet it is God himself and what he is which is ours forever. In grasping the Lord by faith, and saying, "He is mine," and what a sweep the soul has made! It has, as it were, encompassed eternity, set its own seal upon infinity, and appropriated All-sufficiency.

III. Finally, let us spend two or three minutes upon the LAST WORD—"my GOD." "GOD!" What does it mean? Ah, now, you have asked me a question which I cannot answer. The wise man was asked "What is God?" and he requested that he might have a day to consider his answer. When the sun had set he said he must have three days, for in thinking of it the subject grew. They gave him three days, and when these were over he demanded six days more, for the subject was greater than ever. When they called upon him at the six days' end, he claimed twelve days more, for the subject was still beyond him. They bade him take the twelve days, and they would hear the result of his thoughts. The next time he said that he must have a month; and, at the month's end he gave them no information, but assured them he must have a year. When the year was over, he confessed that he should need a lifetime: he should never be able to tell them what God was so long as he lived. There is no defining the Incomprehensible One. Yet, brother, you and I can call him "My God."

Let us reflect upon his being ours as to *his nature*, his person, his essence. There is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit —three in one: then the Father is my God: he hath loved

me, he hath chosen me, he hath begotten me, hath provided for me, he is my Father, my all. Then, too, the adorable Son is mine—Jesus, the Redeemer, the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Intercessor, the Judge, is mine. Then the Holy Spirit is mine—the Instructor, the Quickener, the Sanctifier, the Comforter. Dew, fire, wind, dove—whatever the metaphor under which he veils himself—he is mine. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit—to these beloved and glorious persons of the undivided Godhead faith says "My God."

When I have thought of the blessed persons let me think of *his attributes.* Omniscience is mine, the Lord knows everything for me. Omnipotence is mine, he will do everything for me. Justice is mine, reconciled to me by the death of Jesus. Mercy is mine, enduring forever. Truth is mine, he will keep his promise. Immutability is mine, he changeth not, and therefore I am not consumed. Rehearse all the attributes peculiar to the divine nature and say unto the Lord "Thou art my God, and therefore all thy blessed perfections and glorious attributes are mine."

Think of him again *in what he has done,* as well as what he is. As Creator he is *my* Creator; not merely as creating me, but as making "all things" for me, that I may richly enjoy them. Whatever I look upon I may enjoy, because he made it. He hath made all things holy, and the curse which sin engendered he has removed through the death of his Son, and now as I traverse the world I may delight myself in the works of the Creator and say, "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good, Almighty; and thou givest them to me that I may see thee in them and enjoy them to thine honor." The Lord is also our Redeemer, and the believer calls him "my Redeemer" and "my God." It was *my God* that poured out his life unto death upon the bloody tree. *My God* hath loved me and given himself for me. The Lord is, moreover, the Sanctifier, he carries on the work of grace in the soul, and in this he is my God. He is the God of

providence, and ruleth all things according to his will; and in that character he is my God. The Lord Jesus Christ will come to judge the world, and heaven and earth shall pass away before the glory of his face; but he that shall make heaven rock and reel is my God, and he that shall make the rocks run like rivers, and the stars fall like withered leaves from the tree, is my God, the God of my salvation. Oh, is it not blessed to think of God under any light or aspect under which you are able to conceive of him, and then to be able to say at the end of it all, "He is my God in all his works and in all his relationships, in all his attributes, and all his glories"? To me it is the utmost bliss at this moment to claim with each one of my brethren that he is *my God.*

Do you know, if you could once say this—and I do wish that every man, woman, and child in this house could from the heart say, "My God"—if you could say this, it would sweeten so many things to you. This book—how you would love this precious Bible, for then you would say, "It is my book now, because it is my Father's book—my God's book." You would value every line of it. There would be a new sweetness in every single verse, because it is your Father's handwriting, inspired by his own Spirit—that Spirit which belongs to you, and it tells you of your own Saviour—who loves you, and who gave himself for you. If you could call God your own, you would love the Sabbath supremely, because you would say, "It is my day, because it is the Lord's day—the day of my risen Saviour. He has taken it to himself, and enclosed its hours for his own, and now henceforth I prize its earliest and its latest moments because they are his." A sense of the Lord's being yours would make you love his people too. When I first came to London from the village where I formerly preached, I was very glad to see anybody who came from that region; and if I had seen a dog wag its tail that I had once seen in that village I should have been pleased. I should have loved anybody for the sake of

the dear old place; and, surely, when you can say, "My God," you love all the Lord's people. Many a young Christian has been deceived by hypocrites because of his love to Christians, and that love is sometimes abated by such ill deeds; but where there is overflowing love to the Father there will be affection for the family. Be it ours to show it. If you see in any man anything that is like Christ, love him for it. If he is not all you would like him to be, remember that you, also, are not all you ought to be. Surely if Jesus Christ loves a man you should love him too. Seek your brother's good and aim at benefiting him because he is one of Christ's members. Love for Christ's sake all those who can say "My God."

I do not know, but I seem to myself to have talked away and to have missed my aim and object altogether, compared with what I have felt while meditating in private upon these dear and blessed words, "My God." It is a deep well, but the water is cool and sweet if you can draw it up. "My God,"—there is more than satisfaction in the words. If you have no money, never mind; you are rich if you can say, "My God." If the husband is buried, if the children have gone home to heaven, do not despair, thy Maker is thy husband, if you can cry, "My God." If your friends have forsaken you, if those who ought to have sustained you have been cruel and unkind to you, he changes not, and he bids you call him, "My God." If the unkindnesses of men drive you to say "My God," you will be a gainer by them. Anything which weans from earth and weds to heaven is good. I saw yesterday a park in which they were felling all the trees, and yet there were the poor crows building on elms that were marked to be cut down. I thought to myself, "You foolish birds to be building your nests there, for the woodman's axe is ringing all around and the tall elms are tumbling to the ground." We are all apt to build our nests on trees that will be cut down. We get to love the creature

and to say, "My this," and "My that;" and from this weakness our sharpest sorrows arise. If you build nowhere but on the tree of life, which never can be felled, if you build nowhere but on the rock of ages which can never crumble, happiness will be yours of a safe and lasting kind: but you can only do this by saying "My God."

Now, I dare say, there are some unconverted people here who wonder what we are making all this fuss about. They have their own hoarded treasures and cherished possessions, and they see no beauty in God that they should desire him. No, but let me tell you—you who have no God and no Saviour—the day will come when you would give your eyes, nay, you would give your very lives, if you could say "My God." Men have been worth thousands of pounds, and when they have lain a-dying without God they have said of their gold, "It will not do!" They have had their money-bags brought to the bed, and pressed them to their hearts, and said, "They will not cheer my soul, they will not calm my spirit." If you do not die crying out, "Woe is me that I die without God," yet, at any rate, after death, when you shall have risen from the dead, and you see the Judge, and you stand as a criminal before his bar, you will think yourself ten thousand times ten thousand fools in one that you ever lived and died without God and without Christ. How will infinite anguish rend your heart while you have to confess "I tried to gain the world, but lost my soul! I am a fool of the worst order! Alas! that I should be such a maniac!" O sinner, I wish you would go to Jesus. May God's Spirit lead you to Jesus to-night. Cry mightily to God that he would give himself to you through Jesus Christ the Saviour. He will do it, for he waiteth to be gracious. Try him; and God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

SERMON XIX.

THE LITTLE DOGS.

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."—Matthew xv. 26, 27.

"But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."—Mark vii. 27, 28.

I TAKE the two records of Matthew and Mark that we may have the whole matter before us. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditations thereon.

The brightest jewels are often found in the darkest places. Christ had not found such faith, no, not in Israel, as he discovered in this poor Canaanitish woman. The borders and fringes of the land were more fruitful than the centre, where the husbandry had been more abundant. In the headlands of the field, where the farmer does not expect to grow much beyond weeds, the Lord Jesus found the richest ear of corn that as yet had filled his sheaf. Let those of us who reap after him be encouraged to expect the same experience. Never let us speak of any district as too depraved to yield us converts, nor of any class of persons as too fallen to become believers. Let us go even to the borders of Tyre and Sidon,

though the land be under a curse, for even there we shall discover some elect one, ordained to be a jewel for the Redeemer's crown. Our heavenly Father has children everywhere.

In spiritual things it is found that the best plants often grow in the most barren soil. Solomon spake of trees, and discoursed concerning the hyssop on the wall and the cedar in Lebanon. So is it in the natural world, the great trees are found on great mountains and the minor plants in places adapted for their tiny roots; but it is not so among the plants of the Lord's right hand planting, for there we have seen the cedar grow upon the wall—great saints in places where it was apparently impossible for them to exist; and we have seen hyssops growing upon Lebanon—a questionable, insignificant piety, where there have been innumerable advantages. The Lord is able to make strong faith exist with little knowledge, little present enjoyment and little encouragement; and strong faith in such conditions triumphs and conquers, and doubly glorifies the grace of God. Such was this Canaanitish woman, a cedar growing where soil was scant enough. She was a woman of amazing faith, though she could have heard but little of him in whom she believed, and perhaps had never seen his person at all until the day when she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, help me!"

Our Lord had a very quick eye for spying faith. If the jewel was lying in the mire his eye caught its glitter, if there was a choice ear of wheat among the thorns he failed not to perceive it. Faith has a strong attraction for the Lord Jesus; at the sight of it "the king is held in the galleries, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." The Lord Jesus was charmed with the fair jewel of this woman's faith, and watching it and delighting in it he resolved to turn it round and set it in other lights, that the various facets of this priceless diamond might each one flash its brilliance and delight his soul. Therefore he

tried her faith by his silence, and by his discouraging replies, that he might see its strength; but he was all the while delighting in it, and secretly sustaining it, and when he had sufficiently tried it, he brought it forth as gold, and set his own royal mark upon it in these memorable words, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

I am hopeful this morning that perhaps some poor soul in this place under very discouraging circumstances may nevertheless be led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a strong and persevering faith, and though as yet it enjoys no peace, and has seen no gracious answer to prayer, I trust that its struggling faith may be strengthened this morning by the example of the Canaanitish woman.

I gather from the story of her appeal to the Lord Jesus and her success therein, four facts. The first is, *faith's mouth cannot be closed;* the second is, *faith never disputes with God;* thirdly, I perceive that *faith argues mightily;* and fourthly that *faith wins her suit.*

I. THE MOUTH OF FAITH CAN NEVER BE CLOSED; for if ever the faith of a woman was tried so as to make her cease from prayer, it was that of this daughter of Tyre. She had difficulty after difficulty to encounter, and yet she could not be put off from pleading for her little daughter, because she believed in Jesus as the great Messiah, able to heal all manner of diseases, and she meant to pray to him until he yielded to her importunity, for she was confident that he could chase the demon from her child.

Observe that *the mouth of faith cannot be closed even on account of the closed ear and the closed mouth of Christ.* He answered her never a word. She spoke very piteously, she came and threw herself at his feet, her child's case was very urgent, her motherly heart was very tender, and her cries were very piercing, and yet he answered her never a word: as if he were deaf and dumb, he passed her by; yet was she

not staggered; she believed in him, and even he himself could not make her doubt him, let him try silence even if he would. It is hard to believe when prayer seems to be a failure. I would to God that some poor seeker here might believe that Jesus Christ is able and willing to save, and so fully believe it that his unanswered prayers shall not be able to make him doubt. Even if you should pray in vain by the month together, do not allow a doubt about the Lord Jesus and his power to save to cross your mind. What if you cannot yet grasp the peace which faith must ultimately bring you, what if you have no certainty of forgiveness of your sin, what if no gleams of joy should visit your spirit, yet believe you him who cannot lie. "Though he slay me," said Job, "yet will I trust in him." That was splendid faith. It would be a great deal for some if they could say, "Though he smite me, yet will I trust him," but Job said, "Though he slay me." If he put on the garb of an executioner, and come out against me as though he would destroy me, yet will I believe him to be full of love: he is good and gracious still, I cannot doubt it, and therefore at his feet I will lie down and look up, expecting grace at his hands. Oh for such faith as this! O soul, if you have it, you are a saved man, as sure as you are alive. If even the Lord's apparent refusal to bless you cannot close your mouth, your faith is of a noble sort, and salvation is yours.

In the next place, *her faith could not be silenced by the conduct of the disciples.* They did not treat her well, but yet perhaps not altogether ill. They were not like their Master, but frequently repulsed those who would come to him. Her noise annoyed them, she kept to them with boundless perseverance, and therefore they said, "Send her away, for she crieth *after us.*" Poor soul, she never cried after *them*, it was after their Master. Sometimes disciples become very important in their own eyes, and think that the pushing and crowding to hear the gospel is caused by the people's eager-

ness to hear *them,* whereas nobody would care for their poor talk if it were not for the gospel message which they are charged to deliver. Give us any other theme, and the multitude would soon melt away. Though weary of the woman's importunate cries, they acted somewhat kindly toward her, for they were evidently desirous that she should obtain the boon she sought, or else our Lord's reply would not have been appropriate, "I am not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was not her daughter's healing that they cared for, but they consulted their own comfort, for they were anxious to be rid of her. "Send her away," said they, "for she crieth after us." Still, though they did not treat her as men should treat a woman, as disciples should treat a seeker, as Christians should treat everybody, yet for all that, her mouth was not stopped. Peter, I have no doubt, looked in a very scowling manner, and perhaps even John became a little impatient, for he had a quick temper by nature; Andrew and Philip and the rest of them considered her very impertinent and presumptuous; but she thought of her little daughter at home, and of the horrible miseries to which the demon subjected her, and so she pressed up to the Saviour's feet and said, "Lord, help me." Cold, hard words and unkind, unsympathetic behavior could not prevent her pleading with him in whom she believed. Ah, poor sinner, perhaps you are saying, "I am longing to be saved, but such and such a good Christian man has dealt very bitterly with me, he has doubted my sincerity and questioned the reality of my repentance, and caused me the deepest sorrow; it seems as if he did not wish me to be saved." Ah, dear friend, this is very trying, but if you have true faith in the Master you will not mind us disciples, neither the gentlest of us, nor the most crooked of us, but just urge on your suit with your Lord till he deigns to give you an answer of peace.

Her mouth, again, was not closed by exclusive doctrine,

which appeared to confine the blessing to a favored few: the Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and though properly understood there is nothing very severe in it, yet the sentence must have fallen on the woman's heart like a talent of lead. "Alas," she might have thought, "then he is not sent to me; vainly do I seek for that which he reserves for the Jews." Now, the doctrine of election, which is assuredly taught in Scripture, ought not to hinder any soul from coming to Christ, for if properly understood, it would rather encourage than discourage; and yet often to the uninstructed ear the doctrine of the divine choice of a people from before the foundation of the world acts with very depressing effect. We have known poor seekers mournfully say, "Perhaps there is no mercy for me; I may be among those for whom no purpose of mercy has been formed." They have been tempted to cease from prayer for fear they should not have been predestinated unto eternal life. Ah, dear soul, if you have the faith of God's elect in you, you will not be kept back by any self-condemning inferences drawn from the secret things of God, but you will believe in that which has been clearly revealed, and you will be assured that this cannot contradict the secret decrees of heaven. What though our Lord was only sent to the house of Israel yet there is a house of Israel not after the flesh but after the spirit, and therefore the Syrophœnician woman was included even where she thought she was shut out, and you may also be comprehended within those lines of gracious destiny which now distress you. At any rate say to yourself, "In the election of grace others are included who were as sinful as I have been, why should not I? Others have been included who were as full of distress as I have been on account of sin, and why should not I be also?" Reasoning thus you will press forward; in hope believing against hope, suffering no plausible deduction from the doctrine of Scripture to prevent your believing in the appointed Redeemer.

The mouth of faith in this case was not even closed by a sense of admitted unworthiness. Christ spoke of dogs: he meant that the Gentiles were to Israel as the dogs: she did not at all dispute it, but yielded the point by saying, "Truth, Lord." She felt she was only worthy to be compared to a dog. I have no doubt her sense of unworthiness was very deep. She did not expect to win the boon she sought for on account of any merit of her own; she depended upon the goodness of Christ's heart, not on the goodness of her cause, and upon the excellence of his power rather than upon the prevalence of her plea; yet conscious as she was that she was only a poor Gentile dog, her prayers were not hindered; she cried, notwithstanding all, "Lord, help me." O sinner, if thou feelest thyself to be the worst sinner out of hell, still pray, believingly pray for mercy. If thy sense of unworthiness be enough to drive thee to self-destruction, yet I beseech thee, out of the depths, out of the dungeon of self-loathing, still cry unto God; for thy salvation rests in no measure or degree upon thyself, or upon anything that thou art or hast been or canst be. Thou needest to be saved *from* thyself, not *by* thyself. It is thine to be empty that Jesus may fill thee; thine to confess thy filthiness that he may wash thee; thine to be less than nothing that Jesus may be everything to thee. Suffer not the number, blackness, frequency, or heinousness of thy transgressions to silence thy prayers, but though thou be a dog, yea not worthy to be set with the dogs of the Lord's flock, yet open thy mouth in believing prayer.

There was besides this a general tone and spirit in what the Lord Jesus said which tended to depress the woman's hope and restrain her prayer, yet *she was not kept back by the darkest and most depressing influences.* "It is not meet," said the Lord Jesus, "It is not becoming, it is not proper, it is hardly lawful, to take children's bread and throw it to dogs." Perhaps she didn't quite see all that he might have meant, but what she did see was enough to pour cold water upon the

flame of her hope, yet her faith was not quenched. It was a faith of that immortal kind which nothing can kill; for her mind was made up that whatever Jesus meant, or did not mean, she would not cease to trust him, and urge her suit with him. There are a great many things in and around the gospel which men see as in a haze, and being misunderstood they rather repel than attract seeking souls; but be they what they may we must resolve to come to Jesus at all risks. "If I perish, I perish." Besides the great stumbling-stone of election there are truths and facts which seekers magnify and misconstrue till they see a thousand difficulties. They are troubled about Christian experience, about being born again, about inbred sin, and all sorts of things; in fact a thousand lions are in the way when the soul attempts to come to Jesus, but he who gives Christ the faith which he deserves says, "I fear none of these things. Lord help me, and I will still confide in thee. I will approach thee, I will press through obstacles to thee, and throw myself at thy dear feet, knowing that him that cometh to thee thou wilt in no wise cast out."

II. FAITH NEVER DISPUTES WITH THE LORD. Faith worships. You notice how Matthew says, "Then came she and worshipped him." Faith also begs and prays. You observe how Mark says, "She besought him." She cried, "Lord, help me," after having said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David." Faith pleads, but never disputes, not even against the hardest thing that Jesus says. If faith disputed—I am uttering a solecism—she would not be faith, for that which disputes is unbelief. Faith in God implies agreement with what God says, and consequently it excludes the idea of doubt. Genuine faith believes anything and everything the Lord says, whether discouraging or encouraging. She never has a "but" or an "if," or even a "yet" to put in, but she stands to it, "Thou hast said it, Lord, and therefore it is true: thou hast ordained it Lord, and therefore it is right." She never goes beyond that.

Observe in our text that *faith assents to all the Lord says.* She says, "Truth, Lord." What had he said? "You are comparable to a dog!" "Truth, Lord; truth, Lord; so I am." "It would not be meet that the children should be robbed of bread in order to feed dogs." "Truth, Lord, it would not be fitting, and I would not have one of thy children deprived of grace for me." "It is not your time yet," said Jesus, "the children must *first* be fed; children at the meal times and dogs after dinner; this is Israel's time, and the Gentiles may follow after. But not yet." She virtually replies, "I know it, Lord, and agree thereto."

She does not raise a question or dispute the justice of the Lord's dispensing his own grace according to his sovereign good pleasure. She fails not, as some do who cavil at divine sovereignty. It would have proved that she had little or no faith if she had done that. She disputes not as to the Lord's set time and order. Jesus said, "Let the children first be filled," and she does not dispute the time as many do, who will not have it that now is the accepted time, but are as much for postponing as this woman was for antedating the day of grace. She entered into no argument against its being improper to take the covenant bread from the children and give it to the uncircumcised heathen: she never wished Israel to be robbed for her. Dog as she was she would not have any purpose of God nor any propriety of the divine household shifted and changed for her. She assented to all the Lord's appointments. That is the faith which saves the soul, which agrees with the mind of God, even if it seem adverse to herself, which believes the revealed declarations of God whether they appear to be pleasant or terrible, and assents to God's word whether it be like a balm to its wound or like a sword to cut and slay. If the word of God be true, O man, do not fight against it, but bow before it. It is not the way to a living faith in Jesus Christ, nor to obtain peace with God, to take up arms against anything which God

declares. In yielding lies safety. Say "Truth, Lord," and you shall find salvation.

Note, that she not only assented to all that the Lord said, but *she worshipped him in it.* "Truth," she said, "but yet thou art my Lord." "Thou callest me 'dog,' but thou art my Lord for all that: thou accountest me unworthy to receive thy bounties, but thou art my Lord, and I still own thee as such." She is of the mind of Job: "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" She is willing to take the evil and say, "Whether the Lord gives, or whether he refuses, blessed be his name; he is my Lord still." Oh, this is grand faith, which has thrown aside the disputatious spirit, and not only assents to the Lord's will, but worships him in it. "Let it be what it may, O Lord, even if the truth condemns me, yet still thou art Lord, and I confess thy deity, confess thy excellence, own thy crown rights, and submit myself to thee: do with me what thou wilt."

And, you observe, when she said "Truth, Lord," *she did not go on to suggest that any alteration should be made for her.* "Lord," she said, "thou hast classed me among the dogs:" she does not say, "Put me among the children," but she only asks to be treated as a dog is. "The dogs eat the crumbs," says she. She does not want a purpose altered nor an ordinance changed, nor a decree removed: "Let it be as it is: if it be thy will, Lord, it is my will"; only she spies a gleam of hope, where, if she had not possessed faith, she would have seen only the blackness of despair. May we have such a faith as hers, and never enter into controversy with God.

III. Now I come to an interesting part of our subject, namely, that FAITH ARGUES, though it does not dispute. "Truth, Lord," said she, "yet the dogs eat the crumbs." This woman's argument was correct, and strictly logical throughout. It was an argument based upon the Lord's

own premises, and you know if you are reasoning with a man you cannot do better than take his own statements and argue upon them. She does not proceed to lay down new premises, or dispute the old ones by saying "I am no dog;" but she says, "Yes, I am a dog." She accepts that statement of the Lord, and uses it as a blessed *argumentum ad hominem*, such as was never excelled in this world. She took the words out of his own mouth, and vanquishes him with them, even as Jacob overcame the angel. There is so much force in the woman's argument, that I quite despair this morning of being able to set it all forth to you. I would, however, remark that the translators have greatly injured the text by putting in the word "yet," for there is no "yet" in the Greek; it is quite another word. Jesus said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." "No," said she, "it would not be meet to do this, because the dogs are provided for, for the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. It would be very improper to give them the children's bread, because they have bread of their own. Truth, Lord, I admit it would be improper to give the dogs the children's bread, because they have already their share when they eat the crumbs which fall from the children's table. That is all they want, and all I desire. I do not ask thee to give me the children's bread, I only ask for the dog's crumbs."

Let us see the force of her reasoning, which will appear in many ways. The first is this. *She argued with Christ from her hopeful position.* "I am a dog," said she, "but, Lord, thou hast come all the way to Sidon; here thou art close on the borders of my country, and therefore I am not like a dog out in the street; I am a dog under the table." Mark tells us that she said, "The dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." She as good as says, "Lord, thou seest my position: I was a dog in the street, afar off from thee, but now thou hast come and preached in our borders,

and I have been privileged to listen to thee. Others have been healed, and thou art in this very house doing deeds of grace while I look on, and therefore, though I am a dog, I am a dog under the table, therefore, Lord, let me have the crumbs." Do you see, dear hearer? You admit that you are a sinner, and a great sinner, but you say, "Lord, I am a sinner that is permitted to hear the gospel, therefore bless it to me. I am a dog, but I am under the table, deal with me as such. When there is a sermon preached for the comfort of thy people, I am there to hear it; whenever the saints gather together, and the precious promises are discussed, and they rejoice therein, I am there, looking up, and wishing that I were among them, but still Lord, since thou hast had the grace to let me be a hearer of the gospel, wilt thou reject me now that I desire to be a receiver of it? To what end and purpose hast thou brought me so near, or rather come so near to me, if after all thou wilt reject me? Dog I am, but still I am a dog under the table. It is a favor to be privileged to be among the children, even if I may only lie at their feet. I pray thee, good Lord, then, since now I am permitted to look up to thee and ask this blessing, do not reject me." To me it seems that this was a strong point with the woman, and that she used it well.

Her next plea was *her encouraging relationship.* "Truth, Lord," she says, "I am a dog, but the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from *their master's* table." See the stress laid there by Matthew: "From their master's table." "I cannot say that thou art my Father, I cannot look up and claim the privilege of a child, but thou art my Master, and masters feed their dogs; they give at least the crumbs to those dogs which own them as their Lord." The plea is very like that suggested to the mind of the poor returning prodigal. He thought to say to his father, "Make me as one of thy hired servants": only his faith was far weaker than hers. "Lord, if I do not stand in relation to thee as a child, yet I am thy

creature; thou hast made me, and I look up to thee and beseech thee not to let me perish: if I have no other hold upon thee, I have at least this, that I ought to have served thee, and therefore I am thy servant though I am a runaway. I do belong to thee at least under the covenant of works, if I do not under the covenant of grace, and oh, since I am thy servant, do not utterly reject me. Thou hast some property in me by creation, at any rate; oh, look upon me and bless me. The dogs eat what fall from their master's table, let me do the same." She spies out a dog's relation to his master, and makes the most of it with blessed ingenuity, which we shall do well to imitate.

Notice next, she pleads *her association with the children.* Here I must tell you that it is a pity that it was not, I suppose, possible for our translators to bring clearly out what is after all the pith of the passage. She was pleading for her *little* daughter; and our Lord said to her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the *little* dogs." The word is diminutive, and the woman pitched upon it. The word "dogs" could not have served her turn one half so well as that of "little dogs," but she said, "Truth, Lord, yet the little dogs eat of the crumbs." In the East, as a rule, a dog is not allowed in-doors; in fact, dogs are there looked upon as foul creatures, and roam about uncared for and half wild. Christianity has raised the dog, and made him man's companion, as it will raise all the brute creation, till the outrages of vivisection, and the cruelties of the vulgar, will be things unheard of except as horrors of a past barbarous age. In the East the dog is far down the scale of life, a street wanderer, prowling for scanty food, and in temper little better than a reformed wolf. So the adult Easterns do not associate with dogs, having a prejudice against them, but children are not so foolish, and consequently the eastern children associate with the little dogs. The father will not have the dog near him, but the child knows no such folly,

and seeks out a little dog to join him in his sports ; thus the little dog comes to be under the table, tolerated in the house for the child's sake. The woman appears to me to argue thus—" Thou hast called me and my daughter whelps, little dogs, but then the little dogs are under the children's table ; they associate with the children, even as I have been with thy disciples to-day. If I am not one of them, I have been associating with them, and would be glad to be among them." How heartily do I wish that some poor soul would catch at this and say " Lord, I cannot claim to be one of thy children, but I love to sit among them, for I am never happier than when I am with them. Sometimes they trouble and distress me, as little children pinch and hurt their little dogs, but oftentimes they caress me, and speak kindly and comfortably to me, and pray for me, and desire my salvation ; so Lord, if I am not a child, yet thou callest me a little dog ; so I am, but give me a little dog's treatment ; give me the crumbs of mercy which I seek."

His argument goes further, for *the little dog eats the crumbs of the children's bread with the child's full consent.* When a child has its little dog to play with while he is eating, what does the child do ? Why, of course, it gives a little bit to the dog every now and again, and the doggie himself takes great liberties and helps himself as much as he dares. When a little dog is with the children at meal time it is sure to get a crumb from one or other of its playmates ; and none will object to its eating what it can get. So the woman seems to say, " Lord, there are the children, thy disciples ; they do not treat me very well ; little children do not treat little dogs always so kindly as they might ; but still, Lord, they are quite willing that I should have the blessing I am seeking. They have a full portion in thee ; they have thy presence : they have thy word : they sit at thy feet : they have obtained all sorts of spiritual blessings : I am sure they cannot grudge me so much less a boon ; they are willing

that I should have the devil cast out of my daughter, for that blessing compared with what they have is but a crumb, and they are content that I should have it. So Lord, I answer thine argument. Thou sayest it is not meet until the children are filled to give bread to the dogs, but, Lord, the children are filled and are quite willing to let me have my portion, they consent to allow me the crumbs : wilt thou not give them to me ?"

I think there was another point of force in her plea : It was this, *the abundance of the provision.* She had a great faith in Christ, and believed big things of him, and therefore she said, " Lord, there is no great strength in thine argument if thou dost intend to prove that I ought not to have the bread for fear there should not be enough for the children, for thou hast so much that even while the children are being fed the dogs may get the crumbs, and there will be enough for the children still." Where it is a poor man's table, and he cannot afford to lose a crumb, dogs should not be allowed ; but when it is a king's table where bread is of small account, and the children are sitting and feeding to the full, the little dogs may be permitted to feed under the table for the mere droppings—not the bread the master *casts* down, but the crumbs which *fall* by accident are so many that there is enough for the dogs without the children being deprived of a mouthful. " No, Lord," said she, " I would not have thee take away the bread from thine own children. God forbid that such a deed should be done for me ; but there is enough for thy children in thine overflowing love and mercy, and still enough for me, for all I ask is but a crumb compared with what thou art daily bestowing upon others."

Now, here is the last point in which her argument had force. *She looked at things from Christ's point of view.* " If, great Lord," said she, " thou lookest at me as a dog, then behold I humbly take thee at thy word, and plead if I be a dog to thee then the cure I ask for my daughter is but a crumb for

thy great power and goodness to bestow on me." She used a diminutive word too, and said, "A little crumb." The little dogs eat of the little crumbs which fall from the children's table. What bold faith this was! She valued the mercy she sought beyond all price; she thought it worth ten thousand worlds to her, and yet to the Son of God she knew it to be a mere crumb, so rich is he in power to heal and so full of goodness and blessing. If a man give a crumb to a dog he has a little the less, but if Jesus gives mercy to the greatest of sinners he has none the less, he is just as rich in condescension and mercy and power to forgive as he was before. The woman's argument was most potent. She was as wise as she was earnest, and best of all, she believed most marvellously.

I shall close this outline of the argument by saying that at bottom the woman was, in reality arguing according to the eternal purpose of God; for what was the Lord's grand design in giving the bread to the children, or, in other words, sending a divine revelation to Israel? Why, it always was his purpose that through the children the dogs should get the bread: that through Israel the gospel should be handed to the Gentiles. It had always been his plan to bless his own heritage that his way might be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations; and this woman somehow or other, by a divine instinct, fell into the divine method. Though she had not spied out the secret, or at least it is not told us that she did so in so many words, yet there was the innate force of her argument. In other words it ran thus—"It is through the children that the dogs have to be fed; Lord, I do not ask thee to cease giving the children their bread; nor do I even ask thee to hurry on the children's meal; let them be fed first, but even while they are eating let me have the crumbs which drop from their well-filled hands, and I will be content." There is a brave argument for you, poor coming sinner. I leave it in your hands, and pray the Spirit of God to help you to use it,

and if you turn it to good account you shall prevail with the Lord this day.

IV. Our last and closing head is this : FAITH WINS HER SUIT. This woman's faith first *won a commendation for itself.* Jesus said, "O, woman, great is thy faith." She had not heard of the prophecies concerning Jesus ; she was not bred and born and educated in a way in which she was likely to become a believer, and yet did become a believer of the first class. It was marvellous that it should be so, but grace delights in doing wonders. She had not seen the Lord before in her life, she was not like those who had associated with him for many months : and yet, with but one view of him, she gained this great faith. It was astonishing, but the grace of God is always astonishing. Perhaps she had never seen a miracle : all that her faith had to rest upon was that she had heard in her own country that the Messiah of the Jews was come, and she believed that the Man of Nazareth was he, and on this she relied. O brethren, with all our advantages, with the opportunities that we have of knowing the whole life of Christ, and understanding the doctrines of the gospel as they are revealed to us in the New Testament, with many years of observation and experience, our faith ought to be much stronger than it is. Does not this poor woman shame us when we see her with her slender opportunities nevertheless so strong in faith, so that Jesus himself commending her says, "O woman, great is thy faith."

But her faith prevailed further, that it *won a commendation for the mode of its action,* for, according to Mark, Jesus said, "Go thy way ; *for this saying* the devil is gone out of thy daughter ;" as if he rewarded the saying as well as the faith which suggested it. He was so delighted with the wise, and prudent, and humble yet courageous manner in which she turned his words against himself, that he said, "For this saying the devil is gone out of thy daughter.'

The Lord who commends faith afterwards commends the fruits and acts of faith. The tree consecrates the fruit. No man's actions can be acceptable with God till he himself is accepted, but the woman having been accepted on her faith, the results of her faith were agreeable to the heart of Jesus.

The woman also *gained her desire:* "The devil is gone out of thy daughter," and he was gone at once. She had only to go home and find her daughter on the bed taking a quiet rest, which she had not done since the demon had possessed her. Our Lord, when he gave her the desire of her heart gave it in a grand manner, he gave her a sort of *carte blanche,* and said, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." I do not know that any other person ever had such a word said to him as this woman, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." It was as if the Lord of glory surrendered at discretion to the conquering arms of a woman's faith. The Lord grant to you and me in all times of our struggling to be able thus by faith still to conquer, and we cannot imagine how great will be the spoil which we shall divide when the Lord shall say, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

The close of all is this: this woman is a lesson to all outsiders, to you who think yourselves beyond the pale of hope, to you who were not brought up to attend the house of God, who perhaps have been negligent of religion for almost all your lifetime. This poor woman is a Sidonian; she comes of a race that had been condemned to die many centuries before, one of the accursed seed of Canaan, and yet for all that she became great in the kingdom of heaven because she believed, and there is no reason why those who are reckoned to be quite outside the church of God should not be in the very centre of it, and be the most burning and shining lights of the whole. O you poor outcasts and far off ones, take heart and comfort, and come to Jesus Christ and trust yourselves in his hands.

This woman is next of all an example to those who think they have been repulsed in their endeavors after salvation. Have you been praying, and have you not succeeded? Have you sought the Lord, and do you seem to be more unhappy than ever? Have you made attempts at reformation and amendment, and believed that you made them in the divine strength, and have they failed? Yet trust in him whose blood has not lost its efficacy, whose promise has not lost its truth, and whose arm has not lost its power to save. Cling to the cross, sinner. If the earth sink beneath thee, cling on; if storms should rage, and all the floods be out, and even God himself seem to be against thee, cling to the cross. There is thy hope. Thou canst not perish there.

This is a lesson, next, to every intercessor. This woman was not pleading for herself, she was asking for another. Oh, when you plead for a fellow sinner do not do it in a cold-hearted manner; plead as for your own soul and your own life. That man will prevail with God as an intercessor who solemnly bears the matter upon his own heart and makes it his own, and with tears entreats an answer of peace.

Lastly, recollect that this mighty woman, this glorious woman, is a lesson to every mother, for she was pleading for her little daughter. Maternal instinct makes the weakest strong, and the most timid brave. Even among poor beasts and birds, how powerful is a mother's love. Why, the poor little robin which would be frightened at the approach of a footstep, will sit upon its nest when the intruder comes near when her little ones are in danger. A mother's love makes her heroic for her child; and so when you are pleading with God plead as a mother's love suggests to you, till the Lord shall say to you also, "O woman, great is thy faith; the devil is gone out of thy daughter; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." I leave that last thought with parents as an encouragement to pray. The Lord stir you up to it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SERMON XX.

ÆNEAS.

DELIVERED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And it came to pass as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Æneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord."—Acts ix. 32–35.

I MAY not hope that I shall see you all again, and so, as I have the opportunity of only preaching one sermon to you, I must make it as full as I can of *essence of gospel,* from beginning to end. We have heard of a chaplain who preached in a jail, who selected a subject which he divided into two heads. The first part was the sinner's disease; this he took for his topic on one Sabbath, and closed the sermon by saying that he would preach upon the sinner's remedy upon the following Sunday. Now, there were several of the prisoners hanged on the Monday, according to the custom of the bad old times, so that they did not hear that part of the discourse which it was most necessary for them to hear. It would have been well to have told out the great news of salvation at once to men so near their end, and I think that in every sermon, if the preacher confines himself

to one subject, and leaves out essential gospel truth, under the notion that he will preach salvation by Jesus another day, he is very unwise, for some of his congregation may be dead and gone—alas, some of them lost—before he will have the opportunity of coming to the grand and all-important point, namely, the way of salvation. We will not fall into that evil to-night. We will try to shoot at the very centre of our target, and preach the plan of salvation as completely as we can ; and may God grant that his blessing may rest on it, the Holy Spirit working with it.

I shall only preach this one sermon to some of you : you will, therefore, have the greater patience with me, as I shall not inflict myself upon you again : but, if we are to have only one communication with each other, let us come to real practical business and waste no time to-night. A good deal of sermon-hearing is mere trifling ; let us come to matter-of-fact preaching and hearing at this time. I am afraid that some sermon-preaching is playing too—fine words and oratorical fire-works, but no agony for souls. We mean business to-night. My heart will not be satisfied unless many of you who came in here without Christ shall go down those steps saved by his atoning blood. Bitter will be my disappointment if many do not lay hold of Jesus, and realize in their own souls Peter's words, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." I have faith in the great Physician that many of you will go away whole to-night, though sin-sick when you came into this house of prayer. Much supplication has gone up to heaven for this, and the Lord heareth prayer ; and therefore do I reckon that miracles of healing will surely be wrought in this house on this occasion.

To the point, then. Peter came to Lydda, and found one who bore the classic name of Æneas : no mighty warrior, but a poor paralyzed man, who had been confined to his bed for eight long years. Touched with a sight of the man's feebleness, Peter felt the impulse of the Spirit upon

him ; and, looking at him as he lay there, he said, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole : arise, and make thy bed." Touched by the same Spirit who inspired the apostle, the man believed the message,—believed that Christ had healed him, at once rose and made his bed, and in an instant was perfectly restored. Now let us hear something about this man. We are not to hear Virgil sing, "arms and the man," but we are to let Luke tell us of the man and his Saviour.

I. In the first place, then, it is very clear that THE MAN WAS TRULY SICK. Had he not been *really sick*, the incident before us would have been all a piece of imposture—a feint and a pretence from beginning to end : but he was hopelessly infirm. He had been anxiously watched by his friends for eight years, and was so completely palsied, that during all those years he had not left his bed, which had grown as hard as a stone beneath him. Now, as there is no room for a great cure unless there is a great sickness, so there is no room for God's great grace unless there is great sin. Jesus Christ did not come into the world to save sham sinners, but real sinners ; neither did he descend from heaven to seek those who are not diseased with sin, for the whole have no need of a physician, but he has come to seek those who are deeply diseased, and to give them real healing. This man's sickness was no imaginary ill, for he could not move ; his hands and feet were quite paralyzed. If in any limb there was a measure of motion, it was only a tremulous quiver, which rather indicated growing weakness than remaining force. He was bereaved of all strength. Are you such by nature, my friend, in a spiritual sense ? Certainly you are so ; but have you found it out ? Has the Spirit of God made you feel that you can do nothing aright apart from him, and that you are altogether ruined and palsied unless Jesus Christ can save you ? If so, do not despair because you feel how terribly your soul is smitten ; but, on the contrary, say to yourself, "Here is room for mercy in me. If

ever a soul wanted healing, I do. Here is space for divine power to operate in me, for if ever a soul was weak and palsied, I am just the soul." Be thou cheered with the hope that God will make of thine infirmity a platform upon which he will display his power.

The man had been paralyzed *eight years.* The length of its endurance is a terrible element in a disease. Perhaps yours is no eight years' malady, but twenty-eight, or thirty-eight, or forty-eight, or seventy-eight, perhaps eighty-eight years have you been in bondage under it. Well, blessed be God, the number of years in which we have lived in sin cannot prevent the mercy of God in Christ Jesus from making us whole. You have a very long bill to discharge, while another friend has but a short one, and owes comparatively little; it is just as easy for the creditor to write "*paid*" at the bottom of the large bill as the small one. And now that our Lord Jesus Christ has made full atonement it is as easy for God to pardon the iniquities of eighty years as the sins of the child of eight. Be not despairing, then. Jesus Christ can make such as thou art whole, even though thy heart and thine understanding have long been paralyzed with sin.

The man's disease was one which was then reckoned to be, and probably is now, *entirely incurable.* Who can restore a palsied man? Æneas could not restore himself, and no merely human physician had skill to do anything for him. Dear hearer, has the Spirit of God made you feel that your soul's wound is incurable? Is your heart sick? Is your understanding darkened? Do you feel your whole nature to have become paralyzed with sin, and is there no physician? Ah, I know there is none among men, for there is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there; there never was, or else the daughter of my people would have been healed of her hurt long ago. There is no soul physician except at Calvary; no balm but in the Saviour's wounds. If you feel

that you are incurably soul-sick, and the case is desperate unless infinite mercy shall interpose, then I am glad that you are here to-night. I am glad that there is such a one as Æneas present. Do you know that the most delightful task in the world is to preach to those who consciously need the Saviour? Mr. Whitfield used to say that he could wish to preach all day and all night long to those who really knew that they wanted Christ. We are bound to preach to everybody, for our Master said, "preach the gospel to every creature" under heaven; but, oh, when we get at a knot of hungry souls it is easy and pleasant work to feed them with the bread of heaven; and when hearts are thirsty it is sweet work to hand out the living water, for they are all eager to take it. You know, the great difficulty is that you can bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink if he is not thirsty; and so you may set Jesus Christ before men, but if they do not feel their need of him they will not have him. You may preach in tones of thunder, or plead with accents of intense affection, but you cannot stir them to desire the grace which is in Christ Jesus, unless they feel their need of it. Oh, I am happy to-night—thrice happy—if anywhere in this house there is an Æneas who is sick, and knows that he is sick; who knows his disease to be incurable, laments that he is palsied and can do nothing, and longs to be healed by divine power. He is the man who will welcome the glad news of the gospel of free grace. The man was really sick, and so are you, my hearer; your sins are great, your sinfulness of nature is grievous, and your case is beyond reach of human skill.

II. In the second place, THIS MAN, ÆNEAS, KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT JESUS; because, otherwise, when Peter said, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole," Æneas might have earnestly inquired what he meant, but could not intelligently have acted upon what he could not comprehend. He could not have believed what Peter said, because he would not have

understood his meaning. Mere words, unless they appeal to the understanding, cannot be useful; they must convey light as well as sound, or they cannot breed faith. When Peter said, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole," I have no doubt that Æneas remembered what he had aforetime heard about Jesus Christ, and his wondrous life and death. Now, lest there should be one in this congregation who does not know Jesus Christ, and does not understand how it is that he is able to heal sin-sick souls, let us briefly tell the old, old story over again.

"Jesus Christ," translated into English means a "Saviour anointed." Who is he? He is the Son of the Highest, very God of very God; and when we were lost in sin he who is called the Son of God laid aside his most divine array, and came hither to be dressed like ourselves in this poor flesh and blood; in the manger he lay as an infant, and on a woman's breast he hung a feeble babe. The God who stretched forth the heavens like a tent to dwell in, and digged the deep foundations of the earth, came down to earth to take upon himself our nature and to be born of a woman. Oh, matchless stoop of unbounded condescension that the Infinite should be an infant, and the Eternal God should conceal himself within the form of a babe. This marvel was performed that we might be saved. Being here, the Lord of angels lived some thirty years or so amongst men; he spent the earliest part of his life as a carpenter's son obedient to his father, and he was throughout the whole of his earthly sojourn obedient to his father, God. Inasmuch as we had no righteousness, for we had broken the law, he was here to make a righteousness for us, and he did so. But there was also wanted an atonement, for we had sinned, and God's judgment demanded that there should be punishment for sin: Jesus stepped in as the Surety and the Substitute for the guilty sons of men. He bared his back to the lash of justice, and opened his breast to her lance, and died

that sinners might live. The just for the unjust, he died that he might bring us to God :—

"He bore, that we might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire."

Now, when he had thus lived and died, they placed his body in the tomb, but he rose again on the third day, and he is yet alive; and by this man Christ Jesus, who is risen from the dead, is preached unto the nations the remission of sins. For after forty days this same Jesus, who had been dead and buried, rose into the heavens in the presence of his disciples, ascending till a cloud concealed him from their sight, and he now sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, pleading there the merit of his blood, making intercession for sinners that they may be reconciled to God. Now, brethren, this is the story that we have to tell you, with the addition that this same Jesus is coming again to judge the quick and the dead, for he is Lord of all. He is at this hour the Mediator appointed by the infinitely glorious Jehovah, having power over all flesh that he may give eternal life to as many as Jehovah hath given him, and this we beseech you to consider, lest when he comes as a judge you should be condemned at his bar. Æneas had heard more or less of these great facts. The story of the incarnate God had come to his ears by some means or other, and Æneas understood that though Jesus Christ was not in the room, and there was only Peter and a few friends, and though Jesus Christ was not on earth, but gone to heaven, yet his power on earth was the same as ever it was. He knew that Jesus could work miracles from heaven as well as when he was here below. He understood that he who healed the palsy when he was here, could heal the palsy now that he has risen to his throne ; and so Æneas believed in Jesus Christ from what he had heard, simply

trusting in him for healing. By means of that faith Æneas was made whole.

I will very earnestly dwell on that point for a second or two. I am persuaded that in this congregation all of you know the story of Jesus Christ crucified. You have heard it on the Sabbath from the pulpit. Your children sing it when they come home from the Sunday School. You have a Bible in every house, and you read the "old, old story" in the plain but sublime language of our noble version; but, oh, if you have heard it and know it, how is it that you have not drawn from it the same inference that this poor paralyzed man did? How is it that ye have no faith? Jesus lives, he sits on Zion's hill, he receives poor sinners still. Jesus lives "exalted on high to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins." He can heal you now, and save you now as well as if you met him in the street, or saw him standing at your door knocking for admittance. I would to God that this inference were drawn by you all.

III. We have got so far: the man was sick, and the man knew something about Christ. And now came the most important point of all: THE MAN BELIEVED ON THE LORD JESUS.

Peter said to him, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." The man did not believe in Peter as the healer, for you notice Peter does not say anything about himself. Peter does not say, "As the head of the church, I, by power delegated to me, make thee whole." There is no allusion to any such claim; Peter preached too clear a gospel for that. That is the purest gospel which has the least of man in it, and the most of Christ. I charge you, men and brethren, do not listen to that teaching which sets the priest in front of the Saviour, or even by the side of the Saviour, for it is false and ruinous. Your forefathers, Englishmen, your forefathers bled and died that they might

never submit to that vile superstition which is being now propagated by a considerable party in the Established Church of this once Protestant land! No man beneath the sky has any more power to save your soul than you have yourself, and if any presumptuous priestling tells you that he has, do not believe him, but despise his claims. An old woman asks me to cross her hand with a sixpence, and says that she will tell my fortune. I am not such a fool. And if another person dressed in habiliments, which are not quite so becoming to him as a red clock is to an old woman, tells me that he can regenerate my child, or forgive my sins, I treat him with the same contempt and pity as that with which I treat the wicked hag. I believe in neither the one impostor nor the other. If ever you are saved you must be saved by Jesus Christ alone through your own personal belief in him; certainly not by the intervention of any man, or set of men, hail they from whatever church they will. God send that the Pope and the priesthood and all their detestable deceits may go down in this land, and that Christ may be exalted!

As this man had no faith in any supposed power coming from Peter, much less had he any faith in himself, neither did he look within himself for hope. He did not say to Peter, "But I do not feel strength enough to get well;" neither did he say, "I think I do feel power enough to shake off this palsy." He said neither the one nor the other. Peter's message took him off from himself. It was "Æneas, *Jesus Christ* maketh thee whole; it is not that thou hast stamina in thy constitution and rallying points about thy bodily system. No, Æneas, thou art paralyzed; thou canst do nothing; but Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." That was what the man had to believe; and it is very much what you also, my dear hearer, must believe.

With his faith Æneas had the desires which showed that it was not mere speculation, but solid practical believing;

he anxiously wished to be made whole. Oh, that sinners anxiously wished to be saved! Oh, that yonder angry man wished to be cured of his bad temper! Oh, that yonder covetous man wished to be cured of his avarice! Oh, that yonder lustful man wished to be cured of his uncleanness! Oh, that yon drunkard wished to be cured of his excess! Oh, that men really wanted to get rid of their sins! But no. I never heard of men reckoning a cancer to be a jewel, but there are many men who look upon their sins as if they were gems, which they keep as hid treasure, so that they will sooner lose heaven than part with their lustful pleasures. Æneas wanted to be made whole, and was ready to believe when Peter spoke to him about Jesus Christ.

And what did Æneas believe? He believed—and may you believe the same!—first, that Jesus could heal *him*, could heal *him, Æneas.* John Brown, do you believe that Jesus Christ can cure you? I do not care, John, what your faith is about your wife's case; it is about yourself that you want faith: Jesus Christ is able to save *you*—you, Æneas, you, John Brown; you, Thomas; you, Sarah; you, Mary. He is able to save *you.* Can you grip that, and reply, "Yes, he is able to save *me*"?

And Æneas believed that Jesus Christ was able to save him *there and then*, just as he was. He had not taken a course of physic; he had not been under galvanism to strengthen his nerves and sinews and prepare him to be cured, but he believed that Jesus Christ could save him without any preparation, just as he was, then, immediately, with a present salvation. When you think what Christ is, and what he has done, it ought not to be difficult to believe this. But truly God's power must be revealed before your soul will believe this unto salvation. Yet it is true that Jesus Christ can heal, and can heal at once. Whatever the sin is, he can cure it. I mentioned a whole set of sins just now. The scarlet fever of pride, the loathsome leprosy of lust, the

shivering ague of unbelief, the paralysis of avarice,—he can heal all, and with a word, instantaneously, forever, completely, just now. Yes, sinner, he can heal *you now*. Æneas believed that. He believed, and, as he believed, Jesus did make him whole. Oh, I wish I could to-night so preach the gospel that my Lord and Master would lead many unbelievers to believe in him. O Holy Spirit, work thou with the word! Sinner, dost thou want forgiveness? Christ has wrought it out. Every sin that you have done shall be forgiven you for his name's sake if you trust Jesus to do it. Do you see your sins like a great army pursuing you? Do you think they will swallow you up quick? Jesus Christ, if you believe in him, will make an end of them all. You have read in Exodus how Pharaoh and his hosts pursued the tribes of Israel, and the people were terribly alarmed; but early in the morning they were no more afraid, for Miriam took her timbrel, and the daughters of Israel went forth with her in the dance; and they sang, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." One of the most magnificent notes in that marvellous song was this, "The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left." The damsels took up the refrain, and sang, "Not one, not one, not one! The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left." Now, if you believe in Jesus, the whole army of your sins shall sink beneath the sea of his blood, and your soul shall sing, "The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left." Such shall be your song to-night, if you are enabled to believe in Jesus Christ, God's crucified Son.

But do not think that we preach about the pardon of past sin only, because if a man could get his past sins pardoned, and go on as he did before, it would be so much the worse for him. Pardon of sin, without deliverance from its power, would be rather a curse than a blessing; but wherever sin is pardoned, God breaks the neck of its power in the soul.

Mind, we do not tell you that Jesus Christ will forgive the past and then leave you to live the same life as before ; but we tell you this : whatever the sin is that is now a disease to you, Jesus Christ can heal you of it. He can save you from the habit and power of evil doing and thinking. I will not attempt to go into details. There are odd people coming into the tabernacle on ordinary occasions, and so I dare say there may be to-night. How often has there come in a man to whom I might say, "Put out your tongue, sir. Ah, I see red spots, and black spots, for you are a liar and a swearer." Can my Master heal such a diseased tongue as that ? Yes, trust thou him to-night, and he will make thee truthful, and purge thee from thy profanity. But here is another ; I dare not describe him. Look at him ! He has lived an unchaste life, and strong are his passions ; and he says, "Can I ever be recovered from my vile desires ?" Oh, sir, my Lord can lay his hand on that hot heart of thine, and cool it down to a sweet sobriety of chastity. And thou, fallen woman, do not think that thou art beyond his powers ; he shows himself mighty to save such as "the woman that was a sinner." Ah, if you are a slave to vile sins, Jesus can give perfect freedom from vicious habits. You young man there, you know that you have fallen into many sins which you dare not mention, which coil about your heart, and poison your life like serpents writhing within your conscience. My Lord cau take them all out of the soul, and deliver you from the results of their fiery venom. Yea, he can make you into a new creature, and cause you to be born again. He can make you love the things which you once hated, and hate the things which you aforetime loved, and turn the current of your thoughts in quite another way. You see Niagara leaping down its awful height, and you say, "Who can stop this ?" Ay, indeed, who can stop it ? But my Master can, and if he speaks to the Niagara of your lust, and says, "Cease thy raging !" it will pause at once ; yea, if he bids

the waters of desire leap up instead of down, you shall be as full of love to Christ as once you were full of love to sin. He made the sun to stand still, and caused the moon to pause upon the hill of Gibeah; and he can do all things. Spake he not the world out of nothing? And can he not create new hearts and right spirits in the souls of men who have been far off from him by wicked works? He can do so, and blessed be his name, he will: the world of mind is as much beneath his control as that of matter. If thou believest, O man, to thee I may say as Peter did to Æneas, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole."

IV. Well, now, let us pass on to notice, next, that the MAN WAS MADE WHOLE. There was no imposture about it; he was made whole, and made whole there and then. Just fancy, for a minute, what would have been the result if he had not been made whole. What dishonor it would have been to Peter! Peter said, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole": but there lies Æneas as palsied as before. Everybody would say, "Peter is a false witness." Well, now, I will not say that the preacher of the gospel must see souls saved, or else he is a false witness. I will not say that, but I will say that if ever my ministry, under God, does not save souls I will give it up; for it seems to me that if we do not bring souls to Christ, we preachers are just good for nothing. What are we if we do not turn many to righteousness? Reapers who never reap, soldiers who never win a battle, fishermen who take no fish, and lights which enlighten no one. These are sad but true comparisons. Do I address any unsuccessful minister? I would not speak harshly to him, but I would speak very severely to myself if I were in his case. I remember the dream of a minister. He thought that he was in hell, and being there, he was dreadfully distressed, and cried out, "Is this the place where I am to be forever? I am a minister." A grim voice replied, "No, it is lower down for unfaithful ministers, much

lower down than this." And then he awoke. Ah, and if we do not agonize till souls are brought to Christ, we shall have to agonize to all eternity. I am persuaded of it: we must have men saved, or else we shall be like Peter would have been if he had said, "Jesus Christ makes thee whole," and the man had not been made whole,—we shall be dishonored witnesses.

What dishonor would have been brought upon the name of Jesus if the man had not been made whole. Suppose, my dear fellow sinner, you were to believe in Jesus Christ, and yet were not saved; what then? Oh, I do not like to suppose so, for it is almost a blasphemy to imagine it, but yet consider it for a moment. Believe in Jesus and not be saved! Then he has broken his word, or lost his power to save, either of which we are unwilling to tolerate for a minute. If thou believest in Jesus Christ, as surely as thou livest Jesus Christ has saved thee. I will tell thee one thing,—if thou believest in Jesus Christ and thou art damned, I will be damned with thee. Come! I will risk my soul on that bottom as surely as thou wilt risk thine, for if the Lord Jesus Christ does ever lose a soul that trusts him he will lose mine: but he never will, he never can:

> "His honor is engaged to save
> The meanest of his sheep;
> All that his heavenly Father gave,
> His hands securely keep."

Rest ye in him and ye shall be saved, else were his name dishonored.

And suppose that, like Æneas, you trusted Christ—if you were not saved, what then? Why, then the gospel would not be true. Shut up those churches, close those chapels, banish those ministers, burn those Bibles; there is no truth in any of them if a soul can believe in Jesus and yet not be saved. The gospel is a lie, and an imposture, if

it be true that any poor sinner can put his trust in Jesus and not be healed of his sins; for saith the Lord of old, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." This is his last word to his church, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." If men believing are not saved from the power of sin, then the gospel is not true, and we are sent on a fool's errand: but they *are* saved, blessed be the name of God, and the gospel is truth itself.

Oh, my dear hearer, fain would I urge thee to put thy trust in Jesus Christ to-night, by the experience which I and other believers have enjoyed; for some of us have relied on the name of the Redeemer, and he has saved us. We shall never forget the day, some of us, when we left off self-righteousness and believed in Christ to the salvation of our souls. The marvel was done in a minute, but the change was so great that we can never explain it, or cease to bless the Lord for it.

"Happy day! Happy day!
When Jesus washed my sins away."

I recollect the morning when salvation came to me as I sat in a little Primitive Methodist chapel under the gallery, and the preacher said, "That young man looks unhappy;" and added, "Young man, you will never find peace except you look to Christ;" and he called out to me, "Look!" With a voice of thunder he shouted, "Young man, look! Look now!" I did look, I turned the eye of faith to Jesus at once. My burden disappeared, and my soul was merry as a bird let loose from her cage, even as it is now as often as I remember the blessed salvation of Jesus Christ. We speak what we do know; ours is no hearsay or second-hand testimony; we speak of what we have felt and tasted and handled, and our anxiety is that you may know and feel the same.

Remember, my dear hearer, that the way to use the gospel is to put it to yourselves like this. What is your name? I said, "John Brown," just now, did I not? Suppose it is John Brown, then. Well, the gospel says, "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." Then it means "If John Brown believes on Jesus he has everlasting life." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,"—"Then I, John Brown, believing and being baptized shall be saved." Lay hold of it in that way. Perhaps you say, "But may I put my name to a promise, and appropriate it in that fashion?" Yes, you may, because there is nothing in the Bible to say that your name was left out from the list of those to whom the promise is made. If I were a beggar in the streets, and were very hungry, and I heard that there was a gentleman who was giving a good meal away, and that he had advertised that any beggar might come, I do not think I should say, "Well, my name is not down in his list." I should stop away when I found that he inserted an excluding clause, "Charles Spurgeon shall not have any of the food I distribute," but not till then. Until I read in black and white that he excluded me I should run the risk, and get in with the other hungry folk. Until he shut me out I would go. It should be his deed and not mine that kept me from the feast. Sometimes you say, "But I am not fit to go to Christ." The fittest way to go to Christ is to go just as you are. What is the best livery to wear when you go a-begging? I recollect sometime ago, when I lived not far from here, in the extremeness of my greenness, I gave a man who begged at the door a pair of patent leather boots. He put them on, and expressed great gratitude; but I met him afterwards, and I was not at all surprised to find that he had pulled them off. They were not at all the style of things to go about begging in. People would look at him and say, "What! you needing coppers while wearing those handsome boots? Your tale won't do." A

beggar succeeds a great deal better barefoot than in fine shoes. Rags are the livery of mendicants. When you go and beg for mercy at the hand of God, do not put on those pretty righteousnesses of yours, but go with all your sin and misery, and emptiness, and wretchedness, and say, "Lord, here am I. Thou hast said that Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. I am a soul that wants saving to the uttermost, and here I am. I have come. Lord, save me."

Now, summing all up: this is what you have to do, sinner, in order to be saved to-night, simply believe in Jesus Christ. I saw a young woman from America in the vestry some little time ago who came in great concern of soul to know the way of salvation, and I said to her, "Do you not see it? If you trust Christ, you are saved." I quoted the Scriptures which teach this great truth and made them plain to her, until the Holy Spirit opened her eyes; light came on her face in a moment, and she said, "I do see it. I trust Christ with all my heart: and I am to believe that I am saved because I trust Jesus, and he has promised to save believers?" "Yes," I replied, "You are getting on the rock now." "I feel," she said, "a deep peace beginning in my soul, but I cannot understand how it can be, for my grandfather belonged to the old school Presbyterians, and he told me he was six years before he could get peace, and had to be put into a lunatic asylum, for he was so miserable." Ah, yes, I have no doubt such cases have happened. Some will go seventeen thousand miles round about merely to go across a street, but there is no need for it. There it is—"The word is nigh thee, on thy lips and in thy heart. If with thy heart thou wilt believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and with thy mouth make confession of him, thou shalt be saved." There is naught to be done; there is naught to be felt; there is naught to be brought. No preparation is wanted. Come just as you are, and trust Christ to

save you out and out this night, and you shall be saved. God's honor and Christ's word are pledged to it.

V. This is the last thing. WHEN ÆNEAS WAS HEALED HE ACTED IN CONFORMITY THEREWITH. Peter said unto him, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed." He did so. He rose directly and made his bed.

Now, if any of you say to-night, "I have believed in Jesus," remember you are bound to prove it. How prove it? Why, if you have believed in Jesus, you are made whole, and you are to go home and show people how whole you are. This man was palsied, and had been lying there prostrate eight years, and could never make his bed, but he proved he was healed by making his bed for himself. Perhaps here is a man who when he has entered his house has generally opened the door with an oath. If there is such a person here, and Christ saves you—he will wash your mouth out for you. You will have done with profane language forever. Your wife will be surprised when you go home to hear how differently you talk. Perhaps you have been used to mix with rough companions in your work, and you have talked as they have done; if Jesus Christ has made you whole, there is an end to all filthy speaking. Now you will talk graciously, sweetly, clearly, profitably. In years gone by you were angry and passionate; if Jesus Christ has made you whole, you will be as tender as a lamb. You will find the old lion lifting his head and giving an occasional roar and a shake of his mane, but then he will be chained by the restraints of grace, while the meek and gentle lamb of the new nature will feed in pastures wide and green. Ah, if the Lord has saved you, the drunkard's ale-bench will have no more of you, for you will want better company than the seats of scoffers can afford you. If the Lord saves you, you will want to do something for him, to show your grateful love. I know this very night you will long to tell your children,

and tell your friends, that Jesus Christ has made you whole. John Bunyan says that when he was made whole he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land about it. I do not wonder that he did. Tell anybody, tell everybody, "Jesus Christ has saved me." It is a sensation the like of which no man can imagine, if he has not felt it, to be made a new creature right away, in a moment. That surprises all who see it, and as people like to tell news—strange news—so does a new-born man long to go and tell others, "I have been born again: I have found the Saviour."

Now, mark, you will have to prove that this is so by an honest, upright, consistent, holy life,—not, however, by being merely sternly honest. If Christ has saved you, he will save you from being selfish. You will love your fellow men; you will desire to do them good. You will endeavor to help the poor; you will try to instruct the ignorant. He who truly becomes a Christian becomes in that very same day a practical philanthropist. No man is a true Christian who is un-Christlike—who can live for himself alone, to hoard money or to make himself great. The true Christian lives for others: in a word, he lives for Christ. If Christ has healed you, gentle compassion will saturate your soul from this time forth and forever. O Master, thou who didst heal men's bodies in the days of thy flesh, heal men's hearts to-night, we pray thee.

Still this word more. Somebody says, "Oh, I wish I had Christ!" Soul, why not have him at once? "Oh, I am not fit." You never will be fit; you cannot be fit, except in the sense in which you are fit even now. What is fitness for washing? Why, being dirty. What is fitness for alms? Why, being in distress. What is fitness for a doctor? Why, being ill. This is all the fitness that a man wants for trusting in Christ to save him. Christ's mercy is to be had for nothing, bribe or purchase is out of the question. I have heard of a woman whose child was in a fever

and needed grapes; and there was a prince who lived near, in whose hot-house there were some of the rarest grapes that had ever been grown. She scraped together the little money she could earn, and went to the gardener and offered to buy a bunch of the royal fruit. Of course he repulsed her, and said they were not be sold. Did she imagine that the prince grew grapes to sell like a market-gardener? And he sent her on her way much grieved. She came again; she came several times, for a mother's importunity is great; but no offer of hers would be accepted. At last the princess heard of it and wished to see the woman; and when she came the princess said, "The prince does not sell the fruit of his garden;" but snipping off a bunch of grapes and dropping them into a little bag, she said, "He is always ready to give it away to the poor." Now, here is the rich cluster of gospel salvation from the true vine. My Lord will not sell it, but he is always ready to give it away to all who humbly ask for it; and if you want it come and take it, and take it now by believing in Jesus.

The Lord bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

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